

SACRED SITES
AND HOLY PLACES

STUDIES IN THE EARLY MIDDLE AGES

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VOLUME 11

SACRED SITES AND HOLY PLACES

Exploring the Sacralization of Landscape
through Time and Space

Edited by
Sæbjørg Walaker Nordeide
and Stefan Brink



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PREFACE

This book is partly the result of the international conference ‘Sacralization of Landscapes’ held in Bergen in 2007. The conference was organized by the editors within the setting of the Religion Team of the Nordic Centre for Medieval Studies. The papers from this conference were assembled for this publication, but several additional articles have been included to fill gaps and to create a more comprehensive volume.

The articles cover various aspects, studied from different perspectives and within diverse fields and scholarly traditions. This could have been a hazardous project. However, it is pleasing to see the efforts made by each author to contribute to the central focus of the book — sacralization of landscapes at various times and places, but with a special focus on the different consequences of Christianization. We would like to thank each and every one of the authors.

Adding several papers subsequent to the conference has necessarily led to greater time in preparing this volume for publication. We are truly grateful for the authors’ patience, and we feel the wait has been worthwhile. This collection of articles offers an excellent perspective on sacred landscapes, as observed from a mostly Nordic perspective: the landscape on urban, rural, and single-monument sites; in Northern as well as in Central and Southern parts of Europe; from the Christian era as well as from earlier times and other religions.

We would like to thank Jennifer McDonald, Jena Habegger-Conti, and Eleanor Rosamund Barraclough for improving the English. We would also like to thank the Religion Team of the Nordic Centre for Medieval Studies for funding the conference and preparations for this publication. Last, but not least: thanks to Simon Forde at Brepols and Elizabeth Tyler of the editorial board for the Studies in the Early Middle Ages series for their cooperation and for publishing this book.

Sæbjørg Walaker Nordeide and Stefan Brink
Bergen 2011

Par tibi Roma nihil

Even now, peerless Rome, nearly all in ruins,
 Your fragments show us how great you were intact.
 Patient time has leveled those monuments of your pride;
 The palaces of Caesar and the temples of the gods lie sunk in marshy sand.
 All that great edifice has fallen which dire Araxes
 Feared while it stood and yet lamented once it was destroyed,
 Which the swords of kings, the wise resolves of the senate
 And the gods of human affairs had appointed head of the world;
 Which Caesar chose rather to rule alone unjustly
 Than to be its friend and just rescuer;
 Which rose to glory in three thrusts: it conquered its enemies by force,
 Cut off its criminals by laws and bought its friends by wealth.
 Great men guarded the rising edifice,
 Justice and the wave of guests aided the work.
 But now the city is fallen. I can find no worthier epitaph
 Than: 'This was Rome!'

Yet not the flight of years, nor flame nor sword
 Could wipe away its loveliness.
 So much remains: it can never be leveled;
 So much has vanished: it can never be restored.
 Bring wealth, new marble and the help of gods,
 Let craftsmen's hands be active in the work,
 Yet shall these standing walls no equal find,
 Nor can these ruins ever be rebuilt.
 The art of men once made a Rome so great
 That the art of gods could not destroy it.
 Divinities themselves look awe-struck on divinities sculpted
 And wish themselves the equals of those sembled forms.
 Nature could not make gods as fair of face
 As man created the wondrous images of gods.
 Carved likenesses improve these deities;
 They merit worship more for the sculptor's art than their own divinity.
 The sculptor's art honors them more than their own divinity.
 Happy the city that either has no rulers
 Or rulers ashamed to have no faith.

—Hildebert of Lavardin¹

¹ Scott 1969: no. 36. Translated by Stephen Jaeger, who has kindly permitted the publication of his translation of the poem.

INTRODUCTION: THE SACRALIZATION OF LANDSCAPE

Sæbjørg Walaker Nordeide

The delicate poem reproduced on the opposite page, describing the eternal city, provides a fitting introduction to this book. It highlights the ambiguous relation between nature, divinity, and culture as observed by Hildebert around 1100. By the early Middle Ages, many ruins could already be observed in Rome, and its former greatness was experienced through its ruins like frozen fragments. According to Stephen Jaeger's interpretation of this poem, art can outbid the gods and overcome nature. Nature becomes god, but the gods are not as beautiful or sacred as their sculptures (Jaeger 1994: 162). Nature creates gods, and not the other way around (Jaeger 1997).

Understanding the ambiguous relationship between people, nature, and the sacred is the theme of this book. Most of the articles were originally presented as papers at a seminar entitled 'Sacralization of Landscapes', held at the University of Bergen in September 2007. They are written primarily by Nordic scholars who focus on the Nordic landscape or landscapes as they might have been observed through the eyes of Nordic people on the move through Europe in the first millennium and early Middle Ages, in particular regard to the Christianization of the Nordic countries. The Nordic landscape was never isolated, either in time or space, and with the coming of Christianity from roughly the turn of the millennium onwards, it became increasingly linked to the southern and more central parts of Europe in particular.

Scandinavia in the time preceding Christianization has been explained as a landscape occupied by two major religions, namely Norse and Sámi. In recent

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Figure 1. View of the Colosseum, Rome, in ruins.

Photo courtesy of Sæbjørg Walaker Nordeide. Reproduced with permission.

years, increasing weight has been placed on the argument that these were not two single religions, but rather multiple systems of belief.¹ The precise character and date of the introduction of Christianity to the Nordic countries is not clear, and neither is the exact nature or direction of the influences on the early Nordic Christian establishment. It appears, however, that while some Nordic areas were heavily influenced by the Eastern Church (see Svestad, this volume), most of the region was influenced by the Latin or Roman Church.

The Nordic people experienced landscapes, people, and cultural heritage outside their own countries, for instance, while crusading, but also earlier during Viking expeditions. This collection of articles seeks to understand how various religions have co-influenced people and landscapes in Europe, from antique Greece in the last centuries BC to the latter stages of the Christianization of the Sámi in the far north in the eighteenth century. Nevertheless, the reader will find the sacred landscape of antique Greece in many ways surprisingly similar to that of the more recent example of the Sámi. To represent one case of the sacral-

¹ See for instance Andrén, Jennbert, and Raudvere 2006; Nordeide 2006; Steinsland 2005. The geographic distribution of the various religions is not clear.

ization of a landscape in the centre of Europe, the fascinating example of the restructuring of high medieval Prague was chosen, analysed, and described by Zoë Opačić. Opačić is the only non-Nordic scholar represented in this volume, but she has shared her expertise with the Centre for Medieval Studies in Bergen several times, as well as in Prague. She thus represents one of the influences that affects the Nordic people's present understanding of a past sacred landscape.

The term 'landscape' is defined in many ways (Muir 1999: 2–12). Landscape in this context constitutes the space — real or mythical — in which people live. Bonds between individuals and landscapes are shaped under various conditions. An individual's life can be coloured by this space, while, equally, the landscape can be changed by the actions of individuals.² Adding the sacred to this perspective makes this space even more complex: the way in which the world (and thus the landscape) is observed depends on cultural and religious contexts. A 'sacroscape' could be understood as transitive, not fixed, and as a conglomerate of cognitive and cultural processes (see Anttonen, this volume). It is a complex topic from the observer's point of view, the study of which requires an interdisciplinary approach in terms of considering the landscape and its cultural heritage, as well as the interpretation of relevant textual sources.

Any academic endeavour utilizing multidisciplinary methodologies is not without its problems. In particular, constructing an interdisciplinary study on the sacralization of landscape within a Nordic context is fraught with potential difficulties to be overcome. Scholarly understanding of Norse society and culture around the beginning of the second millennium is hampered by the lack of written sources; most surviving contemporary sources are archaeological, though fragments of texts and toponymic evidence have been preserved (see Brink, this volume). Most of the surviving texts concerning the late Iron Age and early Middle Ages in the Nordic countries were written considerably later than the events described, and the texts are preserved only in later copies of original documents. The historical validity of many of these documents is also somewhat shrouded by the subjectivity of their authors, whose writings are often coloured by a mix of discordant ideologies and political allegiances. Moreover, the dates of both the original text as well as its later copies are often a matter of debate.

The perception of the landscape will be analysed from various viewpoints: from the believers' point of view both as recipients and missionaries and from the views of antique Greek, Old Norse, and Sámi peoples, as well as Christians.

² See, for instance, Giddens 1984.

The following papers also seek to offer some indication of how and when sacred elements were established in the landscape, which depended on individual influences as well as cultural and societal conditions.

Interpreting the Sacred and Sacred Space

The sacred is attractive and bright, but at the same time it is regularly associated with danger, impurity, and taboos; thus access to a sacred area is often regulated by physical borders and rituals to separate it from everyday life. An individual's experience of the sacred is determined by the cultural context in which the reverential act occurs, for as Veikko Anttonen has noted,

Sacrality is employed as a category-boundary to set things with non-negotiable value apart from things whose value is based on continuous transactions. The difference that the sacred makes is based on culturally transmitted myths and forms of ritual representation whereby symbolic constructions of individual and collective life-values are renewed at times and in locations where contact between human beings and God or a supreme life principle becomes actual. (Anttonen 2000: 281)

Cultural perceptions of sacred landscapes have shaped the ways in which human beings have organized their lives and settlements. Human activity usually takes place in close proximity to areas in the landscape that are 'set apart' as sacred. Consequently, it should be easy to find and map a sacred landscape. Although this is true in many cases, in past landscapes associated with religions and people who no longer exist, the process is unfortunately not so easy. Toponymic evidence is often a useful source, acting as a kind of collective memory and as frozen fragments of the sacralized landscapes of the past (Brink 2007; Halbwachs 1992). The observance of sacred artefacts, graves, cemeteries, and cult houses represents other possible sources (see Svestad, this volume; Fabech and Näsman, this volume).

Two examples fittingly illustrate a sacralized landscape: Bergen in Norway and Sigtuna in Sweden. The religious imprint on medieval Bergen is evident (see Figure 2), for the locations of many churches in the city centre are clear indications that the city was constructed within a Christian milieu from its inception. Even in this dense, urban settlement, the church towers could have been seen from anywhere, easily observed above the low, wooden secular houses. Perhaps even more imposing or dominant were the religious institutions facing the city to the south: monasteries and the high/late medieval archbishop's residence faced the town on the peninsula on the opposite side of the harbour. Even if this area was outside the city centre, these buildings were indeed important

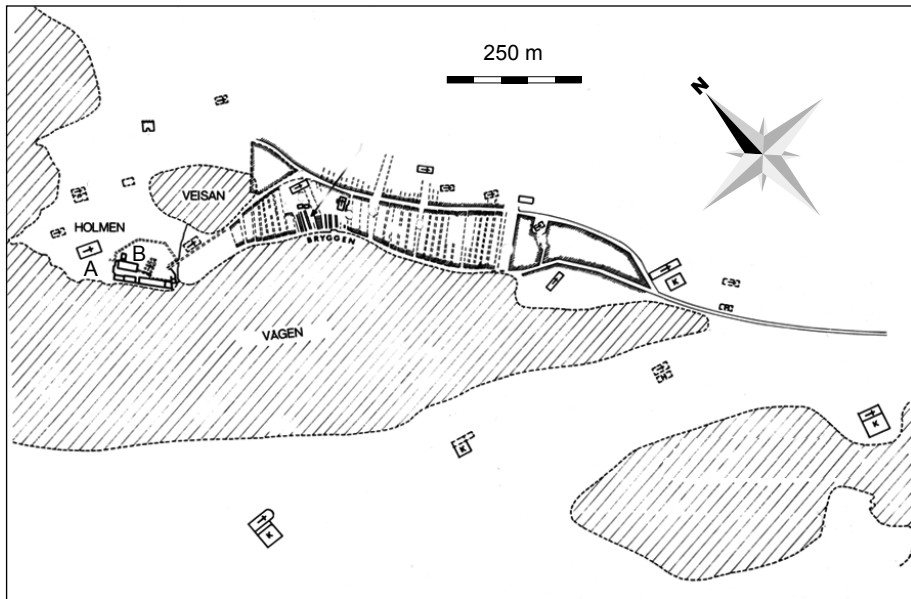


Figure 2. Bergen *c.* 1280; the star shows the position of the archbishop's residence in Bergen from around this time. After Helle 1982: 185. Reproduced with permission.

parts of the view from the town, which was perhaps another reason why the specific locations for these institutions were chosen. They are easily observed upon entering the harbour, with the cathedral and the royal castle (Figure 2, A and B) located to the immediate north as one arrived in the port.

The various parts of Bergen may have been incorporated as part of a larger, religious town plan: that is, the overall architectural design of the city. The same can be argued for Sigtuna in Sweden (Figure 3). The medieval town was designed within a Christian framework, and the urban structure would have fit religious as well as secular needs. Thus, Christian institutions were built along a stone paved road, which was also often used for religious processions. Sten Tesch argues that Sigtuna was modelled as a 'sacred townscape', comparable to an imaginary Jerusalem (Tesch 2007: 93).

The design of the urban landscape constitutes the context for our interpretations of activity in the town: every trace of settlement and activity should be regarded from such a perspective, as this adds considerable points to any socio-economic aspects. The social status and economic function of the urban centre could be related to an area's social and religious status. If this principle is applied to a single ecclesiastical monument such as an archbishop seat, the

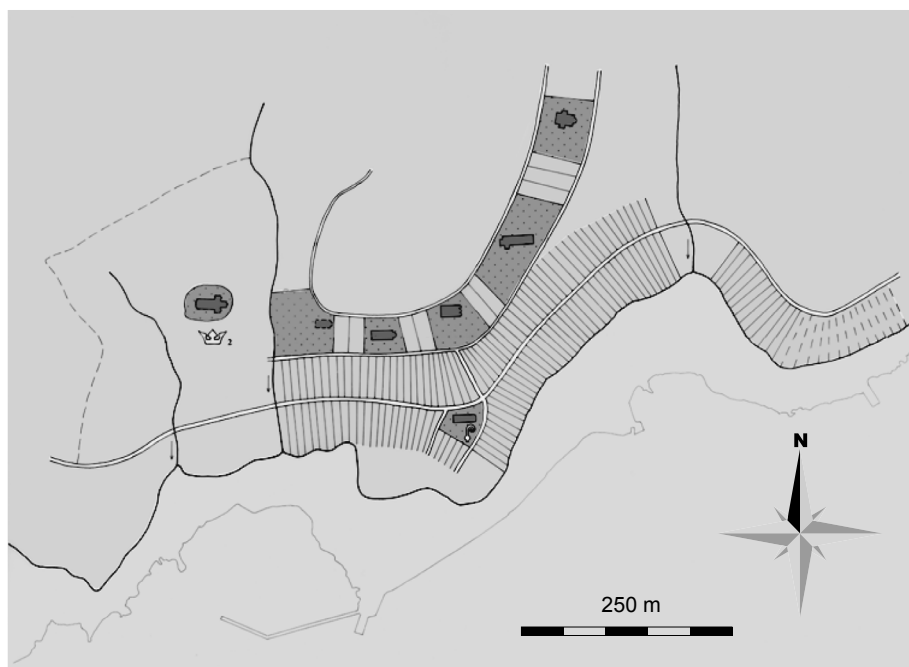


Figure 3. The sacred townscape of medieval Sigtuna. After Tesch 2007: 93.
This illustration is published with the kind permission of Sten Tesch.

status may relate to the sphere in which the archbishop himself functioned, or else measured by the distance from the sacred, for instance as defined by the saint's shrine in the high chancel of a cathedral (Gompf 1996; Nordeide 2003a; Nordeide 2003b: 344–45).

The urban landscapes of both Bergen and Sigtuna were to a large extent sacralized. Yet what exactly is a sacred landscape, real or imaginary? The fact that current citizens view the seven mountains surrounding Bergen as 'sacred' is hardly the type of sacred we are looking for in a landscape from the past. The obvious Christian character of the layout of Bergen and Sigtuna could conceal conflicting religions; indeed in other areas where Christianity was introduced, attempts to erase reminders of past non-Christian religious activity and behaviour can be observed (see Jensen, this volume). The impetus to design a landscape with such clear religious meaning could perhaps have been an attempt to hide the religious beliefs of an extensive population who were non-Christian, and who left few remnants behind. Even if this were not the case, there is no

doubt that 'sacralization' may have been a political approach to conquering the visual picture of a landscape in a time of competing belief systems. The physical environment could have been seen as an important part of the mission strategy. From this point of view, then, a landscape may conceal several layers of sacrality from across the ages.

It is easy to denote a consecrated church and/or a cemetery as a 'sacred landscape'. However, other categories of sacred space can be more complicated to see, particularly if they no longer exist as clear material manifestations and documentary sources are lacking. The process of the 'sacralization of a landscape' involves the landscape *becoming*, or *being viewed* as sacred. The positioning of wooden Sámi *sieidis* (sanctuaries, sacrificial places) next to Christian graves is an illustration of the fact that the landscape may also be filled with multiple sets of sacred values which may exist side by side (see Svestad, this volume).

These examples touch upon another aspect of sacralization: namely that the *sacralizing of a landscape also involves the process of desacralizing a landscape*, since various competing belief systems conquered the landscape by making their mark on it. For instance, Christian missionaries took over sites used for non-Christian worship in the middle centuries of the Anglo-Saxon era and 'Christianized' them. Holy wells of the goddess Annis would often become St Anne's well, and so on (Muir 2007: 115). Thus, as Kurt Villads Jensen describes in his contribution to this volume, the Cistercian monks' performance of cross-marking trees, removing old sacred trees, and reusing the wood in Christian churches was simultaneously a Christianization of the landscape and a purification of the manifestations of old belief systems.

Interpreting Sacred Time

When people and their beliefs disappear, aspects of sacred landscapes persist, even if they are mostly unrecognized by those who subsequently occupy the area. It is possible to witness different layers of the sacred from different times, co-existing in one and the same landscape. Understanding the time and cultural context of these layers is essential for their interpretation. For instance, should high stone crosses and cross slabs in Norway be interpreted as a way of Christianizing a Norse landscape, and thus also testament to the Christianization of Norway around the turn of the millennium (Birkeli 1973; Gabrielsen 2002)? Regardless, the interpretation of these monuments depends on their date. A comparative study of these monuments in the light of later results regarding similar monuments in Germany and the British Isles has

observed that the date of these monuments should be modified or at least verified, and the interpretation may consequently have to change (Nordeide 2010). Around one hundred such monuments are known, some of which are lost. A considerable number of the crosses are located at cemeteries: many in Christian churchyards and a few on Old Norse barrows.

There is a very interesting difference in the distribution of these crosses: ringed crosses are situated mostly in eastern Norway, crosses without rings in western and central Norway. Most stone crosses are found in western Norway, extremely few in central Norway, and none in northern Norway. Compared to ringed crosses, the crosses without rings are more often found outside a cemetery. The decorative style of the monuments shows a similar geographical distribution (Nordeide 2010). How should this be explained? Obviously, when a cross is located in a cemetery, its significance will be perceived differently than when it is found somewhere else in the landscape. Similarly, a stone symbol ranging from *c.* 50–500 centimetres above ground would be understood differently if it had been constructed before the majority of people were Christian, rather than after Christianity was well established. In the first instance, it may have been understood as a disturbing feature within the social landscape, whereas if it was erected once most of the population had been Christianized, it could have been the result of a collective act. If the monuments played a part in the Christianization process, it is likely that various parts of Norway were affected by different sources of influence, or at least, that they perceived the flow of Christian impulses differently.

A fitting example of a landscape with a sacrality that changed throughout the eras is also illustrated by the articles in this volume concerning ancient Greece. While Gullög Nordquist describes the landscape's complex role in ancient Greek religion, Bente Kiilerich describes how the temples in a single location, the Acropolis, changed by adapting to the changing religions. Veikko Anttonen's article is also interesting in this context, illustrating how the perception of the landscape was altered by the Christianization of Finland, and with this the meaning of the terminology associated with the landscape, in words such as *hiisi* (a territorial term; see Anttonen, this volume) and *pyhä* ('sacred'). The example of Prague, however, illustrates how the sacralization of a townscape can be used for political purposes even if the religion has not changed: Christianity played a part in Charles IV's restructuring of the already Christian Prague in the fourteenth century. Charles IV may have been inspired by sacred Rome, while the new layout of the town may have aided the royal cult, as expressed in features such as the architecture and the active use of Christian institutions (see Opačić, this volume).

The Search for the Un-Sacred Landscape

If we identify 'sacred' as a distinct category of landscape, then the next logical step might be to suggest that there are also landscapes that can be termed 'un-sacred'. However, these two categories are not necessarily directly comparable, for although un-sacred landscapes can be identified, they are often described as a mythical category. For instance, associated with Norse religion is the description of Ginnungagap at the beginning of time, and this may represent chaos in Norse myths (Steinsland 2005: 111). Associated with Christianity, the New Testament describes Jesus's prophecy and depiction of a chaotic Jerusalem caused by the citizens' lack of ability to recognize the time of God's visitation. His description is very concrete, describing a Jerusalem in disarray, lacking God's order. At the same time, the description is symbolic: 'They will bring you to the ground, you and your children within your walls, and not leave you one stone standing on another' (Luke 19. 44). Torstein Jørgensen's article (this volume) provides a description of a place in the Old Norse world called *forvé*, an unholy place, 'the haunt of the devil, where neither men nor cattle walk'. Here, Jørgensen illustrates how 'the Devil's landscape' was viewed in a legal context, specifically in the old Norwegian provincial laws. He demonstrates that the law clearly recognized that there were times and places that could be associated with chaos or evil.

It is uncertain to what extent such places were known to the medieval people who should seek out these places in situations of need, as prescribed in the laws. The unholy places may be hard to trace today, particularly in the case of Norway: the description of such locations as places with 'heaps of stones' where no one could walk could describe almost anywhere in this country with steep, rocky mountains.

Final Remarks

The following articles demonstrate the insights that can be gained and the difficulties that arise — both in theoretical and practical terms — from identifying and exploring the sacred and un-sacred landscapes of the past. It is worth reminding ourselves of the words of Mircea Eliade, which are particularly apt in the current context:

All the definitions given up till now of the religious phenomenon have one thing in common: each had its own way of showing that the sacred and religious life are the opposite of the profane and the secular life. But as soon as you start to fix limits to

the notion of the sacred you come upon difficulties — difficulties both theoretical and practical. (Eliade 1974: 1)

Scholars today may admit that it is more difficult to identify an unholy landscape than a sacred landscape. Even though the sacred may have clear boundaries and evidence of rituals which took place there, it is today generally accepted that past cultures were less strict in their division of religious and daily life, for religion was an integral part of it all. During the course of the seminar from which these papers emanate, it was argued that a more strict division between the sacred and the profane may have been introduced into the Nordic landscape by the coming of Christianity. It is a matter of debate as to whether Christianity had a greater effect on the relationship between the people and the landscape in comparison to other religions. Hopefully, this is a discussion that will be continued in the future, invigorated by the insights and analyses that are presented in this volume.

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LANDSCAPES AS SACROSCAPES: WHY DOES TOPOGRAPHY MAKE A DIFFERENCE?

Veikko Anttonen

Introduction

Regardless of the cultural context in which religious beliefs and practices take their form in social life, they are inextricably constrained by space. Not only as adherents of various organized religions, but also as members of nations and ethnic groups, people participate in actions that set apart particular sites, locations, and places and mark them off as 'sacred'. Even though the 'sacred' does not necessarily constitute a religion, various notions of sacrality are fundamental to any society and its inherent system of values. Due to their significance for the local community, sacred sites are distinguished from other arenas of everyday social life by distinctive, value-laden forms of behaviour and/or by various visible markers such as walls, fences, pillars, statues, stones, and trees, the symbolic contents of which are easily recognizable. The meanings of these markers are mediated through narratives containing explicit or implicit rules of behaviour such as interdictions, prohibitions, and prescriptions.

In the ethnographic literature on sacred sites and sacred places (see for example Carmichael and others 1994) we find that there are specific topographical characteristics through which the sacrality of a site is perceived and its social function determined. Features such as holes and openings in the ground, cracks between rocks and caves are documented in ethnographic accounts as ritualized spaces which certain people, such as shamans, are able to employ as entrance

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and exit sites to the transcendental world beyond the ordinary, everyday reality. Sacred sites vary from permanent locations to casual and event-specific sites. Whether in urban or rural settings, shrines, churches, pagodas, temples, synagogues, and mosques of established religions are dominant locations of the 'sacred'. In addition to sacred buildings and monuments, there are sites set apart and marked off as sacred in the secular domain of a society, organized either by a social institution or by individual persons as a memorial to a significant event that has taken place there.

The Theory of the Sacred as a Category Boundary

Prior to cultural formations designated as 'religions' or 'religious world views', the lexeme 'sacred' has been broadly employed as an adjective in languages the world over. Recurrent features can be observed in various linguistic, folkloristic, ethnographic, and religious data from diverse cultural contexts in which the notion of the 'sacred' is used. Ranging from Indo-European and Finno-Ugric to Austronesian and Bantu languages, words denoting the 'sacred' are held as primal terms by which various notions of value — along with the distinction between purity and impurity — have been expressed. In connection with landscapes, the notion is used widely as an attribute for which specific points in the terrain and locales in the environment are set apart and marked off for ritual purposes and bestowed with special meaning. These points in the terrain are usually conspicuous (anomalous or otherwise), attention-grabbing places in the local topography such as springs, rapids, marshes, bays and peninsulas, shallow inlets in lakes, or higher hills and mountains in the wilderness or specific locations along waterways and footpaths. The crucial issue in understanding the selection of ritual locations concerns specific perceptual strategies and cultural modes of thinking on the basis of which of these areas and natural objects have been classified as 'sacred' and invested with agency and power.

In theorizing about the element of the 'sacred' in human language, cognition, culture, and religion,³ I have departed from the idea that categorization is a fundamental cognitive property that governs human thinking and behaviour in general, and forms of religious representation in particular. My theory

³ See Anttonen 1996a; Anttonen 1996b; Anttonen 1999; Anttonen 2000a; Anttonen 2000b; Anttonen 2002; Anttonen 2004; Anttonen 2005. I have drawn theoretical inspiration from the work of several scholars in the field of religion, most significantly from Comstock 1981; Penner 1989; Smith 1978; Smith 1987; and Polomé 1982.

aims to delineate socio-cognitive parameters⁴ that can be assumed to form the basis of sacred-making behaviour. The semantic contents of terms denoting the 'sacred' in the vernaculars of various languages constitute the so-called primary religious data (see Idinopulos and Yonan 1996: 44–45), which — if properly theorized — provides access to insights into the constraints that underlie the formation of religious ideas and behaviour in general, and historically and geographically contingent religious representations in particular.

However, what needs to be kept in mind is that the various uses of terms in the vernacular do not necessarily contain the kind of metaphysical claims typical of Christianity and other world religions (see Tweed 2006: 61). Within the history and archaeology of religion one should not approach the issue of sacrality from the top down, that is, from a theological or metaphysical standpoint, but instead from the bottom up by delineating the socio-cultural and cognitive structures of knowledge that lay the foundation for sacred-making behaviour in specific social contexts. In reference to landscape studies, a general theory of the 'sacred' can be applied contextually to explain recurrent features in the sacralization of landscapes. Discontent with the notion of *hierophany* proposed by Mircea Eliade more than half a century ago (see Eliade 1959: 20–21) as a concept for pointing out places and situations in which the 'sacred' is manifest, I have aimed to identify generative mechanisms that become operative in and have an effect on the cognitive organization of perceptions, emotions, and bodily behaviour. Sharing a similar theoretical objective, Thomas A. Tweed (Tweed 2006: 61) has recently introduced the notion of *sacroscapes* as a scholarly concept for understanding of religion and distinguishing it from other cultural forms. According to Tweed (Tweed 2006: 62), the invitation to look at religions as *sacroscapes* involves ways of seeing and distinguishing 'movements and flows' that have left traces and transformed peoples and places, social arenas and natural terrains.

However, unlike Tweed (Tweed 2006: 42–53), I am not concerned with tropes and figures of speech — whether aquatic or terrestrial — by which religions can be conceptualized through metaphoric predication. I am in full agreement with Tweed that *sacroscapes* are not fixed, but transitive due to their very nature as conglomerations of cultural and cognitive processes. In exploring and understanding religious and aesthetic ways of seeing, mapping, and marking the land, earth, and soil in various geographical, historical, and ideological contexts, I have focused on reading linguistic, archaeological, and ethno-

⁴ My warm thanks to Petra Pakkanen for the notion of parameter. See Pakkanen 2008.

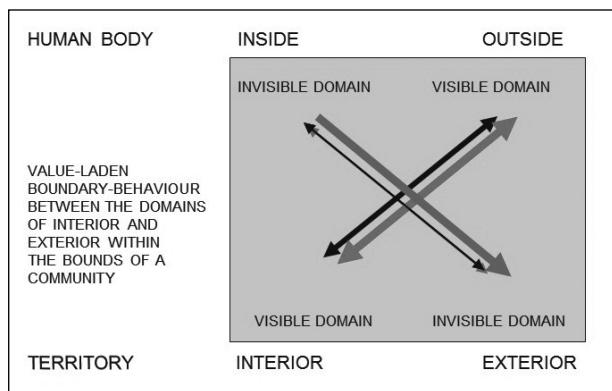


Figure 4.
Theory of the 'sacred'.
After Anttonen 1996a: 94;
Anttonen 1996b: 42;
Anttonen 2010: 142.
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graphic sources in order to unravel observable constraints the validity of which could be tested by the help of an applied theory. I have thus been interested in the 'sacred' more as an adjective than a noun and as a behavioural rather than an emotional category (see Anttonen 1996a: 14–18; Anttonen 1996b: 44–47; Comstock 1984; Nye 2000; Tweed 2006: 77–79).

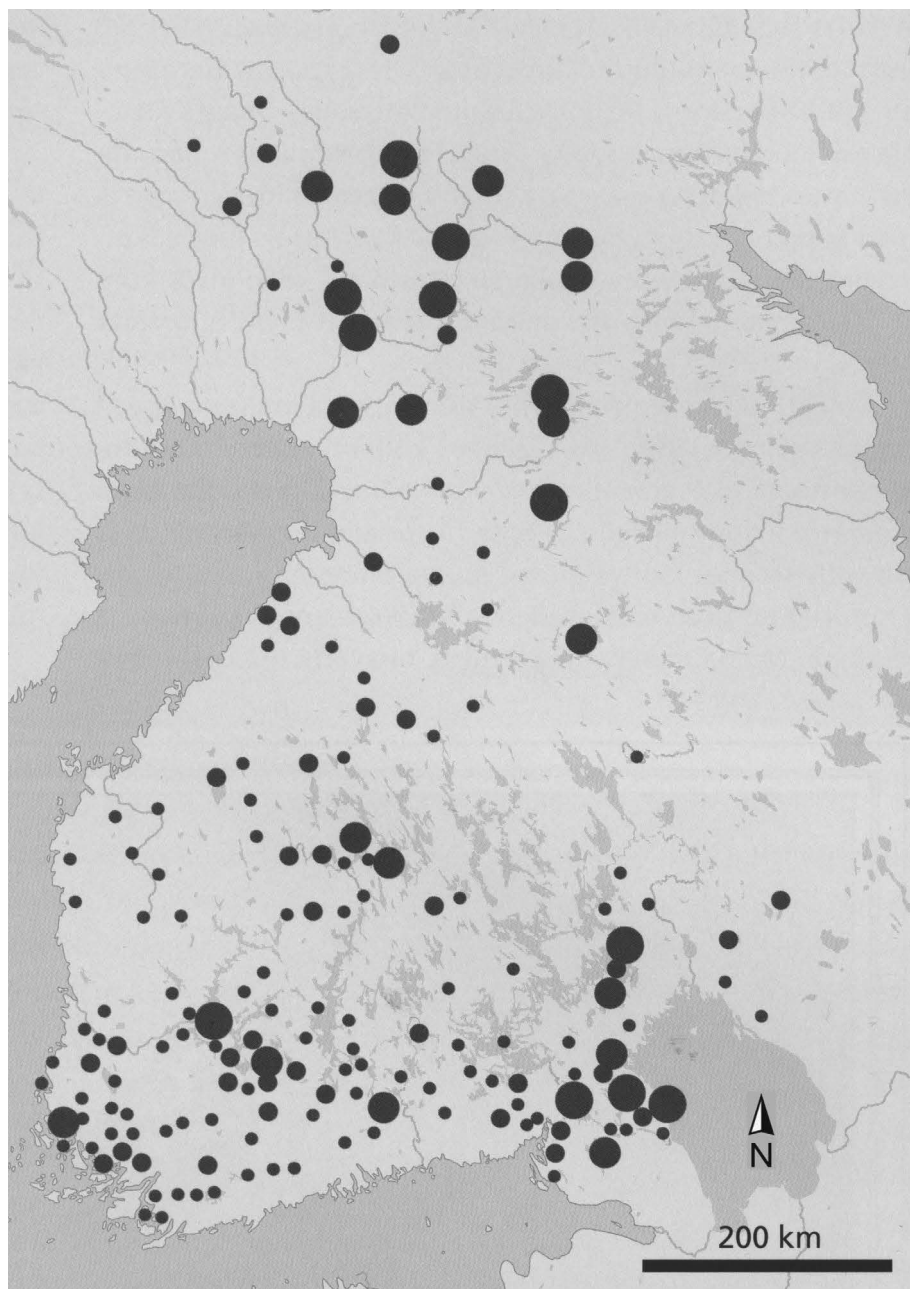
I have argued elsewhere (Anttonen 2008: 211–12) that the theoretical import of the notion of the 'sacred' does not lie in the persistence of specific tradition-bound discursive or non-discursive practices performed in religious or vernacular contexts, but rather in displaying a specific mental disposition peculiar to human beings. According to my observation, the fundamental cognitive property in sacred-making behaviour is the human tendency to invest special referential value and inferential potential to boundaries of temporal, corporeal, and territorial categories. This inherent disposition to observe boundaries and attune social behaviour according to the requirements of the situations becomes operative during times of transition and transformation in both individual and social life. In constructing my theory on the role played by human perceptual strategy to observe boundaries in order to create transitional states for communicating with the culturally postulated sacra, I have found the previous studies by Arnold van Gennep, Émile Durkheim, Edgar Polomé as well as by Mary Douglas, Victor Turner, Jonathan Z. Smith, George Lakoff, and Mark Johnson extremely helpful (see Anttonen 2005: 197). Looking at the Indo-European vocabulary of the 'sacred', Edgar Polomé has made an important distinction between the domains of the interior and the exterior. He writes that 'the main point is the emphasis on the contrast *inside* versus *outside* which prevails at each level of the social structure and conditions human relations' (Polomé 1982: 161). Arnold van Gennep, who also focuses on relations, posited that

‘the presence of the sacred is variable. Sacredness as an attribute is not absolute; it is brought into play by the nature of particular situations’ (van Gennep 1960: 12). He placed special emphasis on the symbolic linkage between legal, economic, and religious conventions in marking socio-spatial boundaries. Natural features with symbolic content — rocks, trees, rivers, and lakes — or objects such as stakes, portals, or upright rocks are used as signs for making customary law visible for social agents. As van Gennep wrote, ‘the inhabitants and their neighbors know well within what territorial limits their rights and prerogatives extend’ (van Gennep 1960: 15). The boundary points are established in social thought by the category of the *sacra*; their illegitimate crossing or passing is made binding by references to supernatural dangers and sanctions. Depending on issues of agency, ownership, and situations in which boundaries are crossed, socially prescribed rituals are considered as the only proper ways for dealing with the crossings and with the removal of boundaries for ensuring the growth of social values (see van Gennep 1960: 15–17).

Cultural Logic of the ‘Sacred’

According to my theory, vernacular terms denoting the ‘sacred’ are conceptualized as category boundaries. The ‘sacred’ becomes established as the conceptual domain in situations in which the inside and the outside of the human body and the interior and the exterior of the territory intersect within the bounds of a society. George Lakoff (Lakoff 1987: xii–xv; Lakoff 1988) and Mark Johnson (Johnson 1987: xix–xxxiii; Johnson 1991) have argued that the structures of human understanding become organized in our cognitive unconscious through our embodied interactions. The significance of the human body and territory as sources of symbolic information are based on their co-extensiveness as bounded entities. Mark Johnson argues that the human body provides a major stage for expressing the conceptual division between the ‘internal’ and ‘external’ in image schemata (Johnson 1987: 13).

As illustrated in Figure 4, the outside of the body is co-extensive with the interior of the territory of a society. Their co-extensiveness is made visible in social life by various forms of separation and by the incorporation of rituals during times of transition. As van Gennep (van Gennep 1960: 192) has pointed out, territorial and bodily orientations are integral aspects of social organization. The visible human body — in its postures, hierarchical relationships, symmetries and asymmetries between the right and left, and the ambiguities between pure and impure — serves as a major stage for expressing and representing social



Map 1. The distribution of *pyhä*-initial place names in Finland and in the Karelian Isthmus (Anttonen 2007: 34). © Affecto Finland Oy, Karttakeskus, Permission L8601/10.

values. This boundary-making potential of the human body has been appropriated by Kim Knott (Knott 2005: 201–28) as a methodological tool for locating and analysing representations of both the religious and secular ‘sacred’.

Another set of symbolic links between corporeality and territoriality occurs when connecting the inside of the human body with the outside of the territory. Both domains are co-extensive with each other in reference to the boundary that sets them apart from the domain of visible social life. The vast array of ethnographic accounts from cultures throughout the world testifies to the significance of ritual control over boundary transcendence and boundary transgression for maintaining social order. The notion of the ‘sacred’ as a transitive boundary is an integral element in socio-cognitive mechanisms by which ‘social movements and cultural flows’ (see Tweed 2006: 54) are ritually controlled in specific value-laden situations. In sum, the ‘sacred’ can be located in reversible category positions whether they pertain to the pure or impure, licit or forbidden (taboo), fixed or unfixed, violable or sacrosanct.

Vernacular Terms for the ‘Sacred’ in Finland and in the Baltic Sea Culture Area

In the following I shall employ the vocabulary of the ‘sacred’ to demonstrate how boundaries in the landscape were drawn in prehistoric and medieval Finland and Estonia as well as in the adjacent culture area around the Baltic Sea. Prior to the introduction of Christianity to the Baltic Sea Culture Area, the qualifiers *pyhä* (sacred) and *hiisi* were the principal classificatory terms by which the normative aspects of spatial divisions and distinctions were communicated in rural village settlements. Both of the terms date back to the language of Indo-European immigrants. *Pyhä* was adopted as a loanword from proto-Germanic during the Bronze Age (c. 1500–600/500 BCE) as a geographical term. The source adjective for the Early Finnic lexeme **püša* (>*pyhä*) in proto-Germanic is **wiha*, the root of which is **wīk-* ‘separation’, ‘cutting’ > Gothic *weihs* ‘consecrated, sacred of separation’ (Koivulehto 1981; Lutzky 1993: 288–92).

According to the National Land Survey of Finland, there are well over two hundred *pyhä*-initial place names in Finland and in adjacent regions of the Baltic Sea Culture Area (see Map 1 below). The attribute *pyhä* and its derivatives in singular and in plural (*Pyhän-*, *Pyhät-*, *Pyhä-*) appear either as solitary boundary markers or as place-name clusters in connection with such natural places as lakes, rivers, rapids, ponds, larger hills, capes, bays, and fells. The qualifier *pyhä* was originally used to express the ownership and control of bound-

ary behaviour in the outlying backwoods and wilderness areas. Place names in which the attribute *pyhä* appears were often very remote from dwelling sites and located at the outermost boundaries of the inhabited area. According to my findings, the term was used when all of the following conditions prevailed:

- 1) The place was situated in the wilderness outside inhabited areas.
- 2) There were no previous names for the area; the attribute *pyhä* was the first name given to the place; the place or the area designated by *pyhä* was newly occupied land.
- 3) As the borders of inhabited territory were marked by the attribute *pyhä*, customary laws were established in order to control the exploitation of its resources; a '*pyhä* place' had a special value for the community; the crossing of territorial boundaries carried both economic and magical aspects.
- 4) The distinct points of terrain marked by *pyhä* were chosen from among topographically exceptional or anomalous sites and intersection of trading routes. Since the term *pyhä* appeared in similar places throughout the geographical area where Finnish was spoken, it became an established term for marking places and boundaries in the landscape.
- 5) Territorial borders marked off and set apart as *pyhä* entailed rule-governed behaviour that was expected not only from men, but especially from women; specific rules of avoidance needed to be observed by women due to their periodical impurity, that is, due to the potential risk for specific social values.
- 6) *Pyhä* was used for places that the linguistic community wanted to differentiate as 'separate', 'marked', 'designated', 'prohibited', 'dangerous', and 'contagious'.
- 7) *Pyhä* also demarcated transitional situations and recurring temporal events for ritual behaviour.

In prehistoric and medieval Finland, the attribute *pyhä* did not have religious connotations; rather, it was a geographical term used at the intersections of spatial divisions and transitional areas to mark value-laden sites in which specific behavioural norms had to be observed. *Pyhä* was used to gloss territorial boundaries at topographically anomalous sites in the wilderness. As an appellative designation for a site, the word *pyhä* also demarcated situations and events for ritual behaviour. Assigning *pyhä* names to distinct topographical locations was based on vernacular discourse and on values that made conceptual divisions between areas belonging to one's own sphere of activity and those outside of it. At the same time, it also demarcated situations and events performed at these locations at various times during the economic year, especially at criti-

cal turning points in the calendar. Finally, *pyhä* names express the norms and sanctions of a local community that regulated behaviour at these significant locations. The adjective *pyhä* was used for places that the linguistic community wanted to differentiate as ‘separate’, ‘marked’, ‘designated’, ‘prohibited’, and ‘dangerous’. Seppo Suvanto, a scholar of Finnish medieval history, has linked *pyhä*-initial toponyms with the spread of a specific boundary-marking institution in Finland. While publishing his studies in the early 1970s, Suvanto was not aware of the etymological and dating work undertaken by the philologist Jorma Koivulehto. As a historian, Suvanto took the cognate forms in Estonian and the Scandinavian languages as his starting point: *püha* and *helg*, *helga* respectively. On the basis of literary sources, he argued that the form *püha* had been used in Estonia in names referring to boundary places from before the thirteenth century, as was the form *helga* in Scandinavia. Suvanto thus argued that the Finnish word *pyhä* was applied in the same context as soon as it became customary to mark land ownership by boundary markers. Suvanto concluded: ‘Thus boundary place names which include *pyhä* as one part may, in fact, constitute the very oldest boundary indicators’ (Suvanto 1972: 39). This would suggest that the boundaries of parish territories were, by and large, established very early, evidently by the end of the Iron Age at the latest.⁵

As Christianity was introduced to the Finns during the twelfth century, the missionaries adopted the spatial vocabulary of prehistoric hunters and agriculturalists. The semantic content of the notion *pyhä* was converted to translate the Latin terms *sacer* and *sanctus*. In contrast to the pre-Christian system of marking spaces with the term *pyhä*, the attribute ‘migrated’ from the remote wilderness regions to the heart of village settlements as it was adopted to set apart churchyards and cemeteries. The semantic change in the meaning of *pyhä* brought by Christianity also altered the ways in which the dual concept of the sacred, that of *hiisi*, was used.

*The Pyhälahti Hoard*⁶

The concentration of archaeological sites in Pyhälahti in the wilderness areas of Northern Ostrobothnia around Lake Kuusamojärvi in Kainuu provides a prime example of the conventional method for establishing *pyhä*-initial toponyms as markers of territorial boundaries. A Stone-Age site with pits from the floor

⁵ In the Finnish context the Iron Age continues later than in Western Europe.

⁶ This section is a work-in-progress and is based on a manuscript co-authored by Jussi-Pekka Taavitsainen, Professor of Archaeology at the University of Turku.

hut as well as a silver coin hoard was found in Pyhålahti in 1896. The site was inspected as late as in 1917. The silver coin find came from a tussock covered with moss in a meadow. The hoard was composed only of coins, altogether comprising 409, of which as many as 397 were German, 2 were Arabic, 3 were Anglo-Saxon, 1–2 were Anglo-Saxon imitations, and 5 were Danish coins. The weight of the find in total was 288 grams. A *terminus post quem* is given by the youngest coin dated to 1061–64, which is the Crusade Period (1025–1300), the last prehistoric period in Finland (on the hoard, see e.g. P. Sarvas 1986: 227–38; Okkonen 2002: 58–59). The find is considered as a sacrificial site. Archaeologists assume that the hoard was concealed in haste (see for example A. Sarvas 1986: 139; Okkonen 2002: 59).

In the surroundings of the archaeological find there is a high concentration of toponyms beginning with *Pyhä* (sacred), *Paha* (evil), *Akka* (Ämmä) (old woman), *Nimetön* (nameless), and *Risti* (cross). In her recent dissertation on Finnish onomastics, Kaija Mallat has shown the close connection between ‘pyhä’ and ‘hiisi’ place names and the cluster of female initial toponyms (Kyöpelä, Nainen, Naara(s), Neitsyt, Morsian, Akka, Ämmä) (Mallat 2007: 52). The conclusions at which she arrives are compatible with the theory I have developed to explain the semantic contents of the vernacular terms for the sacred. The names *Kenttäsaari* and *Kenttålahti*, on the other side of the Pyhäniemi hoard, are also worth mentioning. These names point to the existence of an old Saami dwelling site. In 1924 a seventeenth-century Saami shaman grave was found on the island of Pöyliönsaari in Lake Iso-Pöyliö, approximately three kilometres east from Pyhålahti (Sirelius 1924; P. Sarvas 1973; Ranta 1998).

More systematic and theory-based fieldwork concerning Iron-Age finds in this wilderness area is needed in order to form a more precise picture of the context of the Pyhålahti hoard as well as other archaeological evidence. The basic problems unsolved so far include the chronology and classification of sites and finds. There are numerous pit remains that are not yet identified. Nor do we know how they relate to the forest Saami culture that prevailed in Kuusamo at the end of the Iron Age (see for example Okkonen 2002; Sarkkinen and Torvinen 2003: 19, 142).

An attempt to understand the role of Kuusamo in historical processes of settlement in the Iron Age entails connections between Kuusamo and the local and regional settlements. Relationships existed between the settled peasants and the nomadic Saami people. The reindeer herding Saami groups lived in the wilderness throughout the year and exploited larger territories, while the peasant settlements were located along the routes in the north, south, east, and west. In the oldest historical documents, the population was characterized as a

non-agricultural economy; thus it can be assumed that the underlying demographic stratum in the wilderness areas consisted mainly of hunter-gatherer Saami. I am using the term 'Saami' here as the name of an economic group to refer to the hunting-fishing population consisting of different bands living in central, eastern, and northern Finland. The foreign origin of the Iron Age finds provides evidence for the existence of exchange networks through which goods were delivered between different areas.

In explaining these strategies of sacralization among the peasants as well as the nomadic Saami people, the areas of Kuusamo and Kainuu can be seen as a traffic junction in which ancient trade routes between the White Sea and the Gulf of Bothnia intersected (Okkonen 2002: 64). Not only goods, but also ideas were transmitted along this route during the Iron Age. This route between the two seas was used very late, and its different connections have been documented in, for example, Henric Deutsch's report from the years 1814–15 (Calonius 1929).

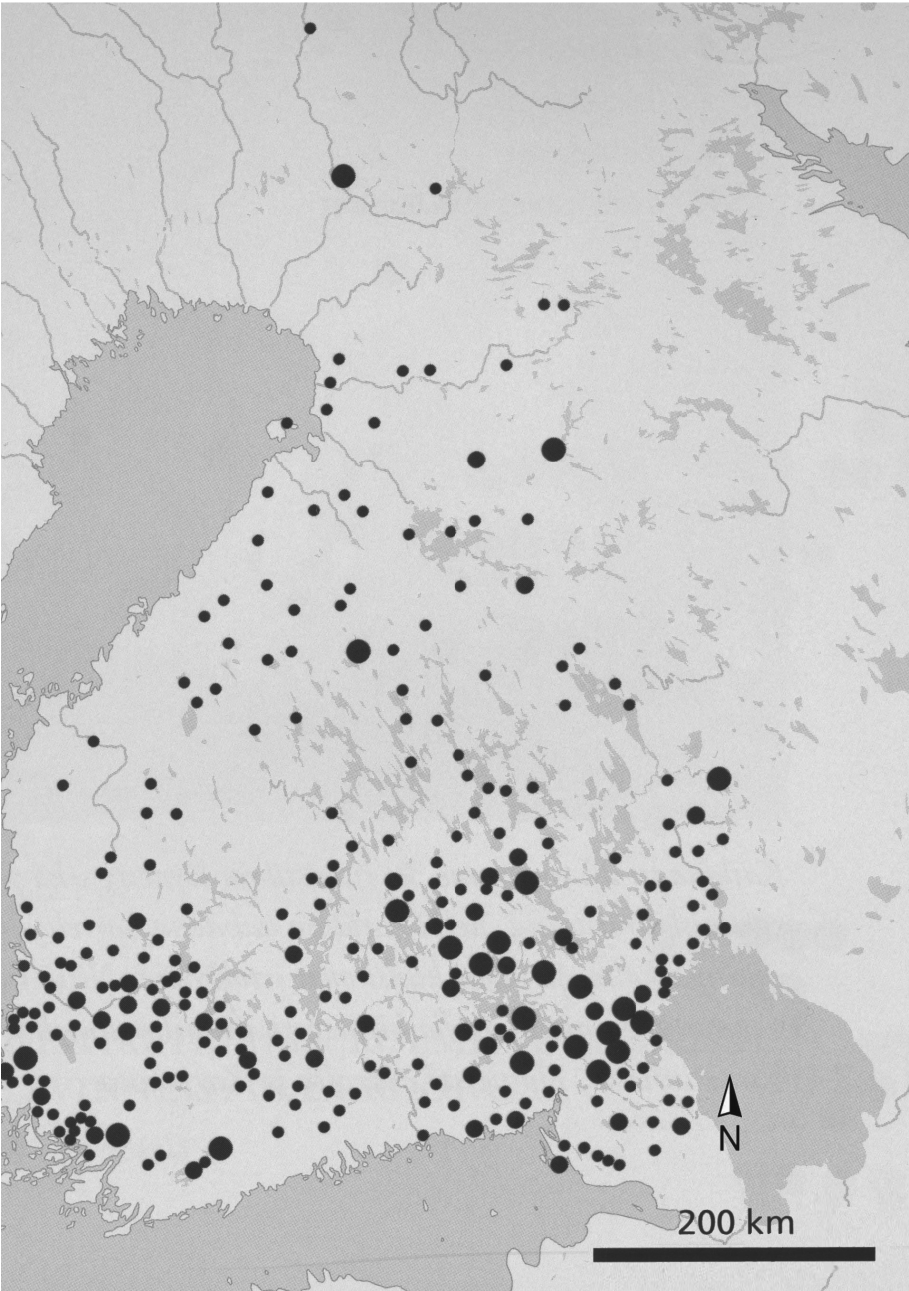
Functioning communication networks and technology were needed in the far-range exploitation of wilderness resources (Fi. *eräntäyhti*), which is a characteristic feature of the Fennoscandian region. Being able to subsist and cooperate in a wilderness region, to travel there and to use its resources, required a system of rules controlled by ancient customary law tradition (see for example Olwig 2002: 55). Subarctic transport conditions favoured waterways both in summer and in winter when lakes, rivers, and bogs were frozen (Taavitsainen, Simola, and Grönlund 1998). The landscape was practically roadless. There were also places in lake and river systems where routes from different directions met. Lake Kuusamojärvi was a junction place and transition area. The lake and its surroundings were an interface of different waterways from the north-east, south-east, and south-west and the point of transactions for traders on their way to the salty seas. Certain economic and social/ritual transactions by different actors may have also taken place in the Lake Kuusamojärvi area. The concentration of *pyhä*- and female-initial toponyms along with other (evil) toponyms (*Paha*-, *Akka*-, *Ämmän*-, *Nimetön*-, and *Risti*-names) belonging to the same semantic field as the adjective *pyhä* (see Mallat 2007: 167–70) gives reason to argue that the context of the Pyhälahti hoard was an intersection of spatial divisions and as such an area of transition with socio-economic and magico-religious significance.

The Semantic Field of Terms Marking the Forest

The Finnish folklorist Martti Haavio (Haavio 1957) was correct in remarking that the oldest layer of the Finnish *pyhä*-naming institution draws our attention to the behaviour of traditional folk culture towards the forest. Prehistoric

hunter-cultivators employed the attribute *metsä* as a boundary line by which 'this world' of everyday social life was demarcated from the 'other world' beyond the *metsä* (edge) in the wilderness. With the Finnish word for forest, *metsä*, members of the linguistic communities were not originally referring to a space with many trees (Vilppula 1990: 287), but rather to a location that was perceived as an edge where the inhabited region ended. In the horizontal world view the conceptual sphere of *metsä* provided the central focus of spatial orientation. Another word for uninhabited forest region was *erä*. The notion of *erä* was used to designate the space beyond the *metsä*-edge. The word *erä* ('round') denotes the part or portion that was separated from the larger totality (see Taavitsainen 1987: 214–15). *Erä* appears as a prefix in the compound word *erämaa* meaning wilderness (cf. Swedish 'vildmark'). *Erämaa* was a specifically marked area used by distinct population groups for subsistence activity (hunting and fishing) (Fi. *eräntähtäalue*).

Finnish archaeologists (Taavitsainen, Simola, and Grönlund 1998: 235) have shown that in prehistoric hunting and fishing economies people had to move extensively through forest regions before they could capture prey such as wolf, brown bear, lynx, and wolverine. Hunters did not consider the forest region hostile if behavioural restrictions, that is, *pyhä* (taboo)-norms, connected with the observation of spatial boundaries, were respected. *Pyhä*-norms concerned particularly sacred places in lakes along the pathways and in forests for burn-cleared areas (Fi. *kaskimaa*, *huuhtakaski*) set apart for cultivation. Situation-specific *pyhä*-norms concerned burn-cleared plots under cultivation, since the unharmed growth of crops was one of the most important social values. Elias Lönnrot, the collector of Finnish-Karelian folk poetry and compiler of the national epic *Kalevala*, gave the following explanation in his Finnish-Swedish dictionary for the meaning of the word *pyhä*: 'on ruvennut koivua versomaan kun maa on ollut pyhässä' (the ground has begun to push up birch after having been in the sacred). Lönnrot was referring to slash and burn cultivation in the wilderness regions. In other words, the ground was marked off, set apart, burned for cultivation, and placed under protection by behavioural rules motivated by magical beliefs about the dangers that threatened the growing of crops. *Eräpyhä* was explained by him as a 'particularly sacred place' (Lönnrot 1958: 292–93). Places set apart as *eräpyhä* were used to mark spatial divisions between the interior and the exterior of an economic area in the wilderness (*eräntähtäalue*). Both of the terms *pyhä* and *eräpyhä* were used to mark an outer border of the *eräntähti*-region. They were used as an appellative designation for topographically anomalous places in the forest or in lakes along the pathways (Anttonen 1992: 62; Anttonen 1996a: 111–16; Anttonen 1999: 12–14).



Map 2. The distribution of *hiisi*-initial place names in Finland (Anttonen 2007: 35).
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Slash-and-burn (Fi. *kaski*, *kaskeaminen*) demanded the occupation of extensive forest regions, since slash-and-burn techniques were only used as a short-term method of cultivation. The latest results of pollen analyses (Taavitsainen, Simola, and Grönlund 1998: 239) also indicate that burn-cleared areas of different ages provided hunters with game. Hunting and cultivation in distant forest regions were not distinct subsistence strategies, but complementary. Fertile hilltops and slopes were most suitable for slash-and-burning and were influential in promoting hunting and especially trapping. Taavitsainen, Simola, and Grönlund (1998, 240) also assumed that *eränkävijä*-hunters cultivated crops for brewing beer for the fur trade as well. Ritual drinking was an essential part of forest behaviour in connection with *eränkäynti*. Beer was not only an intoxicating drink, but a growth-promoting substance loaded with symbolic content among the local *erä*-cultivation community.

The Prehistoric hiisi-Institution in Finland

Along with the territorial qualifier *pyhä*, the term *hiisi* belongs to the same conceptual sphere as the terms *metsä*, forest, and *erä* in denoting an uninhabited mark (cf. *margo* > 'marginal' in Latin). For members of the pre-Christian Iron-Age communities, these sites provided a conceptual domain through which issues relating to identity were negotiated. The Finnish term *hiisi* (and Estonian *hiis*) was used as a territorial term by which notable sites were marked off in the local topography as ritualized spaces for the dead. The term *hiisi* was adopted into the Early Finnic language from the Indo-European **sīdōn* denoting 'side' (Hofstra 1988). In his study of the *hiisi* vocabulary in the Baltic-Finnic languages, the Finnish linguist Mauno Koski argues that a dominant feature dictating the use of the terms *hiis* (Estonian) and *hiisi* (Finnish) was that the site was rocky. We can find references in oral tradition to their use in association with such features in the landscape as 'a damp hollow', 'marsh', 'spring', 'rapid', 'an elevated point in the terrain', 'a rather low hillock', 'a rather high hill', 'a flat treeless spot in the forest', 'rocky area', and 'closeness to water' (Koski 1967: 34–36; Koski 1990). In the language region where Finnish is spoken more than 230 villages were established at the end of the thirteenth century with *hiisi* as the appellative designation for a place. (See Map 2.)

Hiisi came to signify a ritualized space within the confines of a village that was set apart for the dead and in which conceptions of the post-mortal world became actualized. According to Koski, most of the prehistoric *hiisi* sites in the Baltic-Finnic language area have been burial places or 'have belonged to the same sacral area as the burial place' (Koski 1967: 81). At the end of the prehis-

toric period in Estonia, *hiis* was established as a cult site within the burial place of a village or village group, in which the deceased of the village or villages were ritually observed.

Koski argues that the sacrality of Estonian *hiis* sites was originally based on the significance of the dead for the social order of the rural community. In Estonia, sacrificial rituals performed in *hiis*-sites for the deceased members of the kin group were the primary form of sacral behaviour. After the advent of Christianity, when the notion of sacred space became closely connected with the Church and the control it exercised over the behaviour of members of rural communities within the confines of a village settlement, the significance of drawing strict categorical boundary lines between the living and the dead grew less important. It was at this point that the burial groves covered with stones and designated as *hiis* in Estonian were no longer used. However, the discontinuance of building heaps of stones as markers for burial grounds did not put an end to the designation of sites as *hiisi*. Categorizing a natural site as a *hiisi*-site did not originally depend on a stone covering, but on its social function as a visible marker for important value distinctions in the village community (Koski 1990: 409, 411–12, 432–33).

In Viking-Age peasant society, people used the term *hiisi* in a positive sense. *Hiisi* referred to both a 'cult place' and a 'burial ground'. *Hiisi*-places were usually wood-covered, stony hilltops that were located in the close vicinity of village dwellings. *Hiisi* did not originally designate a supernatural being, but a place set apart for ritual purposes. After the advent of Christianity in Finland in the twelfth century, the word *hiisi* became identified with the supernatural agent that ruled non-evangelized spaces, mainly forests but also lakes. In Christian parlance the meaning of *hiisi* evolved from an adjective into a noun denoting 'Hell' (see Koski 1990: 427). *Hiisi* was adopted as a designation for evil spirits originating from the place where diseases and other harmful things were born (Fi. *synty*), that is, the place outside the authority of the Christian God. The exclamation 'Go to *Hiisi*!' came to mean 'Go to Hell'.

In Christian folklore, the dominant motif concerned *hiisi*-beings as giants and as collective, post-mortal beings who dwelled in forests. These were called 'hiisi-inhabitants', or *hiidenväki*. In particular, the existence of big heaps of stones dominating the landscape came to be explained as stones that *hiisi*-giants had thrown at each other. In pre-Christian popular thinking stones were important boundary markers of social spaces (Koski 1990: 429).

Sites designated by the term *hiisi* were deemed 'sacred' in a positive sense due to the significance of the dead for the well-being of the living members of the kin. The positive aspect of a *hiisi*-site derives from the role that the dead

members of the kin played in the moral order of the community and from the notion that the dead promoted the growth of crops. The taboo aspect in the signification of the dead people as '*hiisi*-folk' is linked to the notion of categorical impurity and rules of avoidance that governed the ambiguous, ritualized relationship between the dead and the living and which were later displayed through specific rules that needed to be observed during the period when the corpse was kept within the confines of the house and village community (Koski 1967: 80–81; Sarmela 1994: 58–60).

After the advent of Christianity, the socio-religious function of the *hiisi*-institution came to be valued negatively. The flexible, negotiable relationship between the two partners and their territorial domains, that is, between the areas set apart and inhabited by the dead and the living, became categorically separated. While the vernacular term for the sacred, *pyhä*, was incorporated into Christian vocabulary to denote sites and events set apart from and consecrated for the worship of God, the meaning of the term *hiisi* ended up in a semantic vacuum. It was transformed to denote Hell, the opposing agent that threatens Christian values and virtues. In the folklore of vernacular Christianity, a dominant theme concerned *hiisi*-beings as giants and a collective of post-mortal human-like agents dwelling in forests, designated as *hiidenväki* ('*hiisi*-folk'). In legends, however, the beneficial properties of the otherworldly '*hiisi*-folk' are stressed: they co-operate with converted Christians in the building of churches.

Conclusion

As indicated above, there is a high concentration of *pyhä*- and *hiisi*-initial toponyms in Finland that can be used as evidence of early forms of sacralizing the landscape in the Baltic Sea Culture Area in general and in Finland in particular. Place names can be used as a source of evidence for the ways in which landscape, territory, and specific sites in the local topography were read and deciphered prior to the introduction of Christianity. Consequently, as linguistic signifiers, these terms shed light on that which they signified: the role of spatial distinctions and dimensions in the mytho-geographic world view. With the help of the theory of the sacred as a category boundary, the terms can be used to explain the intimate relationship between forms of socio-economic activity and symbolic forms of religious thinking and behaviour. Archaeology, onomastics, and the study of religion can join forces in an attempt to explain forms of boundary-making in regard to social organization and its systems of values. Attributions of sacrality to specific points of terrain, specific places and social events, plants, animals, artefacts, and persons, and especially to women in

transitional situations, provide important information for scholars from various fields of study. The theory of the 'sacred' presented above is intended as an analytical framework that can be used as a heuristic device for understanding the logic behind the organization of forms of socio-spatial behaviour.

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MYTH AND RITUAL IN PRE-CHRISTIAN SCANDINAVIAN LANDSCAPE

Stefan Brink

I grew up in the forest region of northern Sweden. As a young boy, an old female relative of mine, an aunt to my father, told me now and then of her encounters with the ‘small people’ when she was herding cattle as a herdess at the *seter* (Sw. *fäbodvall*) in the forests, especially of the beautiful *Skoje-Kare*, a supernatural female whom you could see sometimes herding her small, white cattle in the forest.¹ At the *seter* one also had to be aware of the ‘small people’, not to upset them and make them angry, whereupon they would leave you alone and not make life difficult for you. These were no tales told to frighten me; she had seen these supernaturals and they were for real — for her. Aunt Emma had these encounters with the ‘small people’ at the beginning of the twentieth century, when Scandinavia had been a part of Christendom for a millennium. Was she then a pagan in the twentieth century? Certainly not: she was a devoted Christian, who knew how to cut a protective, Christian cross with a knife in the wooden beam over the entrance to the cattle barn, scaring off and preventing malicious supernatural beings stealing cattle or making mischief amongst the animals — and who also attended Mass in church on Sunday.

Legends, stories, the solitude in the deep forest, first-hand knowledge of the environment, and a vivid imagination and preventive actions to take care of fear resulted in an ordering of the landscape into safe or dangerous places. This led to the use of learned or invented ‘rituals’ to cope with fear or ward off potential hazards — real or imagined — such as bears, wolves, or supernatural beings.

¹ Stories of these kinds from my home parish are to be found in Lundh 1952.

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Myths were created to explain incomprehensible phenomena; rituals were performed to disarm dangers. All this was a means of responding to the environment and maintaining a continuous dialogue with the surrounding landscape.

In this article I will discuss how it was or might have been to live side by side with supernaturals, the perception of their abodes in the landscape, and also how people could manipulate or change or charge the landscape to come to terms with phenomena that people had no direct control over. By certain rituals, it was possible to charge land with godly power, to symbolically 'fertilize' land, or to dedicate a district to a god, probably for protection amongst other things.

A Theoretical Background

All cultures have myths, stories that make an unknown, metaphysical world graspable and familiar. In many cultures there is no dividing line between mythology and history,² something that it is important to bear in mind when dealing with oral cultures (see Hastrup 1987; see also Lindow 1997; Meulengracht Sørensen 1991). For early Scandinavia, we have remnants of such myths in the Poetic *Edda* and in Snorri's *Edda*. These myths are not linear or focused stories; they normally lack logic and continuity (Lévi-Strauss 1977–78: *passim*), they are fragmentary and repetitive, and they become very 'kaleidoscopic' because they lack depth in time, constituting rather of fragments set in the present (see Magnus 1990).

Very often these myths are connected with certain physical features in the landscape, objects that, owing to their perpetual presence, make the mythical stories not only memorable but enable them to function as sanctions or witnesses to these myths. When the famous anthropologist Bronislaw Malinowski analysed the myths of the Trobriands, he noticed that they were linked and laid out in the landscape: to move in this landscape was to reiterate the course of the myths. This physical omnipresence of the myths makes them tangible and permanent, for as Malinowski writes:

Here we must try to reconstruct the influence of myth upon this vast landscape, as it colours it, gives it meaning, and transforms it into something live and familiar. What was a mere rock, now becomes a personality; what was a speck on the horizon becomes a beacon, hallowed by romantic associations with heroes; a meaningless configuration of landscape acquires a significance, obscure no doubt, but full of intense emotions. Sailing with natives, especially with novices to the Kula,

² See Vansina 1965; Sahlins 1981; Sahlins 1985; Siikala 1982: 64–78. As for the ancient Celtic culture, see Pennick 1996: 7.

I often observed how deep was their interest in sections of landscape impregnated with legendary meaning, how the elder ones would point and explain, the younger would gaze and wonder, while the talk was full of mythological names. It is the addition of the human interest to the natural features possessing in themselves less power of appealing to a native man than to us, which makes the difference for him in looking at the scenery. A stone hurled by one of the heroes into the sea after an escaping canoe; a sea passage broken between two islands by a magical canoe; here two people turned into rock; there a petrified *waga* — all this makes the landscape represent a continuous story or else the culminating dramatic incident of a familiar legend. This power of transforming the landscape, the visible environment, is one only of the many influences which myth exercises upon the general outlook of the natives. (Malinowski 1922: 298)

One might say that the mythical sites motivate, explain, and sanction the existence and presence of the mythical or numinous world. Historical memories become associated with places familiar to people in myths or stories recapitulated from generation to generation. The moving between these places in the landscape creates a structure for this ‘history’.

The mnemonic ‘pegs’ used to remember myths are extraordinary natural objects, remarkable ancient monuments,³ other man-made structures, and especially place names in the landscape. As long as the place names are remembered, they preserve the myths. When the place names are forgotten, the myths may also fall into oblivion (Magnus 1990: 170), something that Maurice Leenhardt was faced with when studying indigenous cultures in Melanesia. On several occasions, people were unwilling to tell him stories of the past, with the excuse that they had forgotten one or more of the place names relevant to the story. This goes back to a phenomenon often found in studying the myths and mythical histories of indigenous cultures; in telling a story, the teller places himself where the story takes place and becomes part of the geography of the story, as Leenhardt (1979: 84) describes it.

A new land is also in a way domesticated by producing metaphysical explanations of features in the landscape — for example, mythic, creational stories of when a giant threw a huge rock or cut a mountain in two, thus making a valley — which may end up in some myths. Some of these may even produce place names attached to the physical object, something that we have a lot of in the *Book of Settlement* in Iceland (see Sveinbjörn Rafnsson 1974; Bandle 1977a; Bandle 1977b).

³ For myths and popular beliefs regarding ancient monuments in central Sweden, see the interesting accounts by Mats Burström and Torun Zachrisson in Burström, Winberg, and Zachrisson 1997.

In this way, the landscape becomes history (Tuan 1977), the past of the people living in that territory. To destroy that landscape or to move the people away from the territory is to wipe out their history. The territory is not only a land resource for the physical existence of a people, it is also their past and their memory (see Johansen 1988: 19). In this landscape, it is not only history that is embedded, but also morality. The Indians of North America took knowledge and morality from the landscape; the landscape was the basis of myths, and the myths produced guidance for good behaviour and decent morality (Basso 1984: 26).

In historical times, we in the western world have transformed nature and landscape (i.e. the cultural landscape) from an essentially existential 'partner' — charged with mythical, cultic, numinous, and socializing places of memory, places with which people had a 'religious' connection — into economic entities, containers of resources and raw material, that we can use or rather misuse in a unilateral way. For the former 'places of memory', Michail Michailovic Bachtin (Bachtin 1981: 7) has coined the term *chronotops*, by which he means places in the landscape where time and space coincide and fuse together, where time materializes and where history petrifies into monuments.

I wonder if it is possible to set up stages in our attitudes and relations to the landscape, or perhaps better in our perceptions of the intrinsic value and character of the landscape? During pre-Christian times, all nature and landscape were metaphysically 'charged' in different ways, with different degrees of energy as regarded holiness or sacrality; the landscape was *metaphysically impregnated* as a totality, and people lived in a numinous environment (see Lévy-Bruhl 1925; Lévy-Bruhl 1931; Lévy-Bruhl 1938). Everything 'out there' was, as Mircea Eliade (Eliade 1968: 9) would have called it, a huge *hierophany*. Under the influence of Christian culture, a division emerged between the profane and the holy, where sacrality became 'institutionalized' in certain buildings and structures, whereas the environment that surrounded these built-up structures became profane. Today in the secular western world, there are practically no sacral entities that cannot be profaned. Parish churches, no longer having a parish to serve, are turned into galleries, table-tennis halls, and coffee shops. The environment and the landscape are at our disposal as raw materials, and the religious component has vanished, so that the sacral structures may be profaned and used for other, secular purposes.

The modern world's perception of landscape is both secular and profane. In a way, the landscape has lost its innocence and mysticism. The rationality of modern man and his constant demand for understanding and explanation constitute major obstacles to our understanding of our earliest ancestors' world

of ideas. For them, nature was allowed to be mystical, without any demands for rational explanations; a mountain could be the abode of one's forefathers without raising any importunate reflections or doubts as to whether this was *de facto* possible or not. The landscape was allowed to be metaphysically charged. Where modern man rationalizes and intellectualizes, early man allowed himself Being in the World, as it was, to be overwhelmed by it and to be amazed at it.

According to the American sociologist Daniel Bell, this process of secularization is due to the fact that life has become so much more rationalized, and the profanization is due to modernism's claim to superiority (see Edsman 1995: 234). *Science* has taken the place of *religion* as the source of wisdom and as the Superior Elucidator, and the landscape or the environment is totally in the hands of the Market, looked upon as a reservoir or container which we may exploit for the benefit of human progress.

Yi-Fu Tuan has qualified this theme by contrasting the European and the Chinese attitudes to nature. He concludes that the European sees nature as subordinate to himself, whereas the Chinese sees himself as a part of nature. Tuan also focuses on Greek culture, in which land was not regarded as an object to be exploited, but as a true force that physically embodied the powers that ruled the world. In many non-Christian cultures, natural settings and nature itself were holy in different respects, and selected features in the landscape were regarded as sacred and worshipped. In the Christian tradition, on the other hand, holiness was not associated with the landscape but was invested in man-made features, such as altars, shrines, churches, and other buildings that often dominated the landscape. Churches were erected over holy rocks, caves, and other features of importance in Christian mythology. In the Christian view, as Tuan formulates it, it was not emanation from the earth, but ritual that consecrated a site. Man, not nature, bore the image of God. Tuan continues with pagan antiquity, in which each facet of nature had its own guardian spirit, and before one ventured to cut down a tree, for example, it was important to placate the spirit in charge. By destroying animistic beliefs, Christianity made it possible to exploit nature in a way that other cultures would never have dreamed of (Tuan 1974; Tuan 1977).

Hence, in ancient Greek culture, the landscape was metaphysically charged in a way that meant that gods, lower deities, demons, and spirits possessed the environment and lived side by side with man (see Burkert 1987: 24–26; Zaidman and Pantel 1992: 55–60; see also Gullög Nordquist, this volume). The mountain peaks belonged to or represented *Zeus*, the sea *Poseidon*, the fertile soil *Demeter*, the pasture *Pan*. In this overall picture, islands in particular were dedicated to or the home of certain gods, such as *Apollo* on Delos and

Helios on Rhodos. In the early Greek geographer Pausanias's travel guide and description of Greece dating from the middle of the second century AD, we find many examples of the perception of this sacral landscape and mythical geography (Alcock 1993: 174–75).

In the landscape, caves and peaks in particular were often sanctuaries or sacred sites (see Burkert 1987: 24–26; Bradley 2000: 18–32). Fresh water, in the form of springs, wells, rivers, and lakes, could be sacred in the landscape as well, to the extent that these were sanctuaries (van Leuven 1981: 13). Although the temple seems to have been introduced into the religious sphere of ancient Greece in the eighth century BC, the active cult still took place outdoors, on mountain peaks, in caves, or at small altars out in the landscape (Coldstream 1985: 68). The temple was merely the house of the god(s).

To the Greeks, all nature must be described as a sacred landscape, created by the gods and inhabited by gods and demons, spirits or 'powers', in Greek *daimon* (δαίμων). This word corresponds to the Roman concept of *numen* or *genius*. In the Roman religion, a certain place might have some kind of sacred value or power, a *numen* or a *genius loci*. These concepts must be considered to correspond with the concept of *mana* found in the Polynesian cultures of the South Pacific. A person might have *mana*, a royal person certainly had a great deal of the stuff, but a place could also possess it. In these cases, the persons or sacred sites became *tabu* to different degrees (see e.g. Best 1982: II, 15–30).

Apart from mythical poems, place names also inform us of mythical and religious beliefs in the landscape. In this way, the Greek landscape reflected mythic history, and mythic history defined the landscape. Therefore the past — both the historical and the mythical past (which are one and the same) — continues to live in the present landscape.

The pre-Christian religion of Scandinavia from the first millennium AD as we know it — or rather as we think we know it — was a religious system called *siðr* or *for siðr*, which consisted of a pantheon of 'major' gods and divinities of lesser importance, together with spirits, giants, and ancestors.⁴ The gods and their personalities are presented to us with Snorri's *Edda* as the major filter; we know practically nothing of the spirits and the minor divinities. In particular, we apprehend the myths and eschatological framework in the poems of the Poetic *Edda*. The fact that the *siðr* was obviously also an agrocentric religion is

⁴ For descriptions of religious systems with major and minor deities, together with ghosts, spirits, and other supernatural beings, see for example the Maori of New Zealand (Best 1982) and the ancient Polynesians of Tahiti (Oliver 1974: I, 47–122).

intimated in the many theophoric place names. These place names also show us that there were regional differences throughout Scandinavia regarding the worship of certain gods. It was a religious system adapted to and grown out of a static, sedentary culture within a spatially graspable society with chieftains and 'kings'. The worship of ancestors was obviously centred on burial mounds and burial grounds, but to what extent these burials were used for ritual and cultic activities, we do not know. However, in studying Iron-Age society in Scandinavia, it seems most probable that ancestors played a vital part in the life of the living and that burial mounds were most likely looked upon as cult sites (see Birkeli 1938; Birkeli 1943; Baudou 1989; Kaliff 1997; Kaliff 2001; Artelius 2000; Sognnes 2000: 96–100; Gräslund 2001; see also Fortes 1961; Sahlins 1968: 106–13; Barth 1975: 123–25).

A religion may either bind people to a place or free them from it. The pagan religion of Scandinavia was obviously of the former kind. The worship of local and regional gods probably bound people to places and districts. This pagan religion was hence in a more 'primitive' stage, with its earthbound deities in a fertility cult, than the Christian religion. It is therefore obvious that, when the 'Europeanization' started in Scandinavia, with towns, feudalism, coinage, a new written language, territorialized 'nations', etc., the old, pagan, religious system also became obsolete and had to be replaced by a new, universal religion, with an omnipotent and omniscient sky god. This new religion cut Scandinavian society's chains to the earth and to the *heimat*.

On this theme, it is appropriate to cite Yi-Fu Tuan, who has written:

In religions that bind people firmly to place the gods appear to have the following characteristics in common. They have no power beyond the vicinity of their particular abodes; they reward and protect their own people but are harmful to strangers; they belong to a hierarchy of beings that extends from the living members of a family, with their graded authority, to ancestors and the spirits of dead heroes. Religions of this local type encourage in their devotees a strong sense of the past, of lineage and continuity in place. Ancestor worship lies at the core of the practice. Security is gained through this historical sense of continuity rather than by the light of eternal and timeless values as propounded in transcendental and universal religions. (Tuan 1977: 152–53)

This kind of religious system was obviously present during the first millennium in Scandinavia, a type of religion that the pagan Scandinavians shared with the ancient Greeks (see e.g. Burkert 1987; Sissa and Detienne 2000), with the Maori of Polynesia (see e.g. Best 1982: 1), and with many other peoples in history.

The Origin and Content of Sacred Place and Space

In a pagan or ethnic religion, a mountain, valley, lake, river, spring, grove, stone (slab), or tree could be recognized as sacred, but also, of course, the same could apply to man-made structures.⁵ Even more spatial phenomena, such as land, a settlement district, and even an administrative district could have a certain link with a god.⁶

To some extent, we find the kind of natural features that could be regarded as sacred in the pagan Scandinavian landscape in the enactments in the provincial laws that prohibit the worship of these objects (Nilsson 1992: 27–39). In the older Gulathing's Law (Eithun, Rindal, and Ulset 1994: ch. 29) we read that: 'vér scolom eigi blota heiðit guð ne hauga ne horga [eða reiser staung og kallar skaldzstöng]' ('we shall not sacrifice to pagan god or to mounds or to *hörgr* [or erect a pole and call it *skaldzstong*]'). In the Hälsinge Law (Schlyter 1844: Kb 1), and also similar in the Upplandic Law (Schlyter 1834: Kb 1): 'Ængin skal affguþum blotæ, ok ængin a lundæ æller a stenæ troæ' ('No one shall sacrifice to idols, and no one shall believe in groves or stones'). In the Guta Law:

Þet er nu þý nest at blot ier mannum mikít forbuðit, oc fyrnska all þaun sum haiðnu fylgir. Engin ma haita a hautki a hult eða hauga, eða haiðin guð, huatki a vi eða stafgarða. Þa en naquar varðr at þi sandr ok laiðas hanum so vitni a hand at han hafui haizl naquar þa með mati eða með dryckiu sino som ey fylgia kristum siði. (Schlyter 1852: ch. 4)

[And thereafter, that sacrificial feast is severely forbidden for everyone and all old customs, following paganism. No one may invoke groves or mounds or pagan god(s), *vi* [cult sites], or *stafgarða*. If anyone is found guilty and convicted by witnesses, that he has given food and drink as offerings, not according to Christian custom.]

From these quotations, we can see that the Church was of the opinion that it was necessary to write down prohibitions on the worship of mounds, that is, within a pagan cult of the ancestors on the burial grounds, of cult sites and constructions (*hörgr*, *vi*, *stafgarða*, *stang*), of groves and stones (*lunder*, *sten*). They obviously had in mind the pagan custom of making offerings to and deal-

⁵ As for the terms *landscape* and *myth* also the use of the term *pagan* (Sw. *hednisk*) for a kind of ethnic, non-Christian, non-Islamic, non-Hindu, etc. religion raises problems; see Hultgård 1991.

⁶ In his dissertation, Per Vikstrand (University of Uppsala) is laying a new foundation for the study of the pre-Christian religion in Scandinavia and the pagan sacral place names (see Vikstrand 2001).

ing with the 'lower' deities — the land spirits and elves — and giving them food and drink (*mater, drykker*).

It is extremely difficult today to understand the underlying concepts that constituted the imbued metaphysical or supernatural quality that was assumed to exist in a sacred grove, well, forest, mountain, or river. Their existence as what the ancient Romans would term *numen* — that is, objects and phenomena imbued with godly or spiritual power — is obviously one aspect. However, there are perhaps other aspects, such as a defined area impregnated with what the early Polynesians would call *mana* or an elevated disposition, with, for instance, special conditions regarding jurisdiction (in a society where cult and law were intimately connected). A sacred grove, well, lake, river, or mountain could therefore be a place or an area (1) where one might sacrifice to the gods, that is, a cult site, (2) where one could have a closer contact with gods or ancestors, and where one might perform rituals, hence interfaces in the landscape (3) where one might receive godly power or be spiritually charged, for example, with holy water or under a sacred tree, (4) which was dedicated to some god, because you were one of his or her 'people' or so that he or she might protect you, or (5) where you might be given asylum or protection that was sacrally sanctioned.

Manipulating or 'Charging' the Landscape

After this introductory discussion, I would like to address a very difficult topic, namely how man interacted with the landscape to 'charge' it, in the way that man 'addressed' the gods or communicated with them and appeased them so that they would fertilize land and make life more prosperous, hence actually to 'manipulate' the landscape with the help of the gods. This is, of course, a theme well known in most cultures, and also found in the Christian religion. To start from the end, two very common means of charging land were (1) by using fire and (2) by walking the land carrying idols, and the element which was used as the main interface with the godly world, and therefore the best element for religious interaction, was, of course, water.

Fire is well known as being useful for claiming, taking charge of, or charging people or land. Two famous cases are mentioned in the Icelandic sagas, first when a burning arrow was shot over the enemy, thereby predestining the warriors to Óðinn, and the other as mentioned in *Landnámabók* where land was claimed in the initial settlement period by shooting a burning arrow over the area in question.

We find this theme also among the highland Scots and Picts (Dodgshon 2002: 34). In this mountainous, treeless landscape, freestanding hilltops, which provided an exceptional view over the surrounding landscape, always seem to have been important in mythical and cultic perceptions. It is common to find man-made constructions on these hilltops, in the form of standing stone slabs, some of them probably cult buildings and some that seem to be dated to as early as the Neolithic period. The eastern highland Scots had an annual ritual, performed well into historical times, whereby a bonfire was lit on one of these prominent hills. This fire was then used to light a series of torches, which were taken down to the farms by the farmers and their families. There they walked — sun-wise — around a field, around the farm and the byre, before lighting the farmstead's fire. Usually the most fertile field in this area was called *The Lost*, which seems to be derived from a Scottish word *losaid* 'fire', probably referring to this annual fire ritual (Dodgshon 2002: 34). These kinds of fire cults were well established and are found in historical church records. The purpose was obviously to communicate with the godly world, where the fire on the hilltop probably was looked upon as a communication device located close to the gods, from which godly power could be harnessed to charge the land and secure fertility and prosperity for the field and people on the farm.

In this connection we have some utterly strange toponyms found in Scandinavia — theophoric district names, hence place names for an area, with a god's name as the qualifier (see Vikstrand 2001: 63–65). These are not plentiful, and they are in any case interpretatively problematic, but their potential existence opens up interesting perspectives.

In southern Jutland we have the old hundred *Frøs herred*, while elsewhere in the old Danish realm we find *Onsjö härad* (ODa. *Othins herath*) in Scania. The first name could indicate that the district was dedicated to or in some way affiliated with the god *Freyr*. However, the name is somewhat puzzling, since southern Scandinavia in principle lacks theophoric place names where *Frø* is a qualifier (Brink 2007: 109–10). A similar uncertainty occurs with *Onsjö härad*. Formally the name may be translated as 'Óðinn's *herath*', where *Óðinn* in some way was affiliated to the district, considered to be its protector, and so on. In the case of *Frøs herred*, I have the creeping suspicion that the qualifier may be another name or word than the god's name, due to the fact that *Freyr* names seem not to be found in southern Scandinavia, and therefore a cult of *Freyr* may not have existed there. In the case of *Onsjö härad*, there is a strong possibility that the first element in this juxtaposition is elliptical, emanating from an earlier *Óðinssior*, especially perhaps in a compound **Óðinssioar herath* (> *Óðins herath*). In *Onsjö härad* we have a most enigmatic lake, which several

scholars have assumed to be the origin of this theophoric name, thus an earlier **Óðinssior*. To continue, in the province of Västergötland we find OSw *Frøsfierþunger* as a name for a sub-district in the hundred of Vadsbo härad, and in the province of Uppland a (probably ancient) small district is called OSw *Frøstolpt*, later found in a parish name *Frøsthults socken* (Andersson 1990).

Within this category of names we may perhaps also count two intriguing examples, again from Uppland, namely two hundreds (OSw. *hundari*). In the central part of Uppland we have a hundred called OSw. *Ullarakers hundari*. A very prominent settlement in this hundred was in the Iron Age *Ulltuna* (< *Ullartunir*) (Ljungkvist 2006). The name of the hundred most certainly refers to the Thing assembly site for the *hundari*, hence a place called *Ullaraker*. In this case a probable and interesting possibility is that the god *Ullr* had some affiliation to the district, being especially worshipped here or a protector for the people in the district in some way. We find a similar case in the west of Uppland, *Dorsakers hundari*. In the same way, the Thing assembly site must have been *Dorsaker*, which gave its name to the hundred. Additionally, we also here have a prominent settlement called *Torstuna* (< *Dorstunir*). In this case we thus have the god *Þórr* linked to the district in some way.

There are many ways to try to explain these names (Wahlberg 2003: 258; Vikstrand 2001: 182). In the case of *Torsåker/Torstuna*, Per Vikstrand (Vikstrand 2001: 151–54) has come up with an exciting idea. In and around the settlement of Torstuna he identifies several indications of early medieval and prehistoric cult and centrality.⁷ Some 500 metres north of the church at Torstuna, Vikstrand has found an area of arable land called *St. Olofsåker* ‘Saint Olof’s arable land’, which he identifies with the former *Torsåker* ‘Þórr’s arable land’, an identification that is impossible to prove, but potentially likely. In the case of *Ulleråker/Ultuna* we have the somewhat different situation where the two are found not geographically together, but at a distance of around 10 kilometres between each other, if we follow Per Vikstrand’s location of Ulleråker’s Thing site to somewhere in the centre of the city of Uppsala as it stands today.

There are of course many possibilities to explain these names. One interesting hypothesis is that a god or a goddess was dedicated to or affiliated with a people or an area, either for protection or for some other purpose.

The syncretistic features of the medieval Church have been discussed in an important and interesting article by Anders Hultgård,⁸ which in some cases

⁷ *Torstuna* and *Torslunda* both containing Þórr’s name; Kungshögen ‘the King’s Mound’ and *Kungshusby* ‘the King’s *husaby* (royal farm or manor)’.

⁸ The discussion below is building on Hultgård’s article. For references, see Hultgård 1992.

were continued into the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. One of these was the carrying of idols or relics of holy saints around in the fields. These kinds of rituals are found all over Europe and have been described and discussed before. A common theme is that the Church seems to have adopted a pagan ritual, and adapted and changed it into a Christian ritual. In the case of Scandinavia, the question is whether the examples we have are borrowings from the Continent, brought in by the Church in the Middle Ages, or if they originate in a domestic, pagan Scandinavian context. Hultgård makes a good case for Scandinavian origins for the examples he gives.

The best example we have, at least for Sweden, is the so-called 'kornguden', the grain or barley God, known from Vånga parish in Västergötland. When the sowing was completed in the spring, the farmers in the parish went to the church and took out a wooden idol, identified as St Peter by the art historian Jan Svanberg, and all parishioners followed when the idol was carried through the fields to secure good growth for the season. This ritual is known from the eighteenth century, and similar rituals are known from other parishes in Sweden and Norway. The actual idol is still preserved today and dates from the thirteenth century. The common explanation for all these rituals, the carrying around of an idol of a saint or Christ in the fields, is to secure good growth and gain good harvest.

In Vånga during periods of droughts, the walking and idol-carrying ritual was accompanied by the digging out of a dried-out pond, which Hultgård argues is an example of a ritual connection to water. This is further evidenced by the fact that in some parishes the starting point for the walking ritual was at some prominent sacrificial well, such as in Edestad in Blekinge. In Eidsborg in Norway each Midsummer night, the idol of St Nicolaus was carried around a small lake, in which the idol eventually was washed. I will not expand on this example by connecting it to the well-known case told by Tacitus when the wagon with the 'idol' of Nerthus was washed in a small lake, after it had been used in a ritual journey. Instead Hultgård connects these 'gångeriter' to the well-known medieval procession with the relics of St Erik in Uppsala. In the early text *St Erik's Miracles* the cult of St Erik is described. Every year during the 'gångedagarna', the 'walking days', it says that it was custom to take the saint's relics in an official procession from Old Uppsala to Östra Aros (modern-day Uppsala). According to another source, on 18 May, hence St Erik's day in the ecclesiastical calendar, there was a procession with St Erik's banner over the field in Uppsala, aiming to 'helga fruchten med på jorden', as it is described in the source, hence to fertilize the land. Medieval benedictions, obviously to be read out in the fields to secure good growth, have been preserved in some Swedish

books of rituals. In *Manuale Upsalense* from 1487 we have the tradition of a *benedictio seminis*, potentially used during the procession in the cult of St Erik.

Hultgård's analysis of these rituals is that they probably, or most certainly, are adoptions and adaptations of pagan fertility rituals, and he connects these with place names such as *Frösåker*, *Torsåker*, and *Ulleråker*, which have been interpreted as examples of places where fertility cult rituals had been performed, and also with Continental examples, where it is explicitly stated that the rituals were of pagan origin. What we have is an expression of man using godly power to charge land and to 'manipulate' the landscape with the help of the gods.

In his discussion, Hultgård stresses that water was an important device in these rituals, and I will end this paper by once again highlighting how water was the main interface for communication with the metaphysical world, something that has existed since time immemorial.

Water from lakes, rivers, wells, and bogs — that is, liminal places — was looked upon as a medium that brought human beings closer to gods. If one wished to communicate with the gods, it would be wise to present values and goods — in other words, offerings — to these waters. This act would be by far the quickest way to get into contact with 'the other side' (Ilkjær and others 1990–2006; Stjernquist 1998; Busch 2000; Capelle 2000).

As regards chronology, an overall picture emerges for these offerings and depositions in waters and bogs in Scandinavia. We find them in the Stone Age, in the Bronze Age, and in the early Iron Age, and the custom continued into the Christian time with the adoption and consecration of wells used in the pagan cult to Holy Trinity wells and St Olaf's wells in particular.

A special case is the war-booty offerings in lakes and bogs, found especially during the early Iron Age in southern Scandinavia. These archaeological sites are today famous: Thorsbjerg, Vimose, Nydam, Kragehul, Illerup, Ejsbøl, and Skedemosse on Öland (see esp. Ilkjær and others 1990–2006; Hagberg 1967–77; Fabeck 1991). In other cases, more commonplace offerings have been found in bogs, wells, and lakes, such as Röekillorna in Skåne, Kärringsjön in Halland, and Tissø on Sjælland (Arbman 1945; Carlie 2000). Bog body finds of people who were probably ritually killed are known from Borremose, Tolund, and Grauballe in Denmark (Glob 1971).

Several *Guðsiór* are found in Scandinavia, obviously to be interpreted as the lake where one or several god(s) dwell or which is dedicated to god(s), hence the examples of names that are direct counterparts to similar place names from other ancient landscapes, such as Greek place names with a god's name. One example is *Gussjö* in the province of Västmanland in Sweden (Ståhl 1985: 90).

Running water could also be the abode of god(s). One example of this is the Norwegian river of *Gudå* in Meråker, Nord-Trøndelag. The name is a compound of *Guð* 'god' and *á* 'river', and it has been interpreted by Sophus Bugge (see Rygh 1904: 85; Sandnes and Stemshaug 1990: 135) as 'the holy river, the river consecrated to the gods'.

I will end this paper by illuminating the importance of the water, lakes, and rivers in the pre-Christian cult of Scandinavia, by presenting a new, potentially very important case from Tjølling in southern Norway. In the very centre of the settlement district and parish of Tjølling there is, just north of the church, one small lake, *Vittersøtjønna*, and one even smaller lake, *Lilletjønna*. It is possible to show that they are remnants of a much larger lake, which was situated between the church at Tjølling and Vittersen in the north. To the east, it ended at a steep hill called *Helgaffell*. The name of this lake was probably ON **Vettrir*, to be found as the first element in the name *Vittersen* (Vittrixsyni RB, Vittrissinne 1440), which may be derived from a word group ON *vitr*, *vétr*, *vettr*, *vætr* (f. 'supernatural being, spirit, god'), Sw dial. *vittra* ('fairy (of the forest)'), OE *with* ('demon, being'), hence a probable meaning for the lake name is 'the lake where supernaturals or gods dwell'. This could thus be a counterpart to names like *Gudsjö* and *Tissø*. With this interpretation, of course the name *Helgaffell* becomes very interesting. It looks as though what we have here is evidence of a sacrificial lake in the central parts of the Tjølling and Kaupang area, perhaps a counterpart to the more well-known *Tissø* in Denmark. It would be extremely interesting to have an archaeological excavation in this former lake, especially at the foot of the steep *Helgaffell*. This is a concluding tip to any archaeologist amongst us.⁹

⁹ This article links up with, expands, and reuses some of the material I discussed in Brink 2001.

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RITUAL LANDSCAPES AND SACRAL PLACES IN THE FIRST MILLENNIUM AD IN SOUTH SCANDINAVIA

Charlotte Fabech and Ulf Näsman

Introduction

The landscape of Scandinavia in the first millennium consisted of numerous places, mostly unknown today, but some are still visible as ancient monuments. In Scandinavian archaeology there is a long tradition of interpreting them in the context of an agrarian landscape — graves being the only ancient monuments with obvious relations to the other world. Yet people who once lived in the landscape encultured it with memories, myths, and thoughts, for it was ‘a mythical landscape’ (Brink 2001: 88). The daily toil of production was interwoven with rituals, while sacrality and profanity were indistinguishable aspects of the same physical landscape, and a sacral landscape was embedded in the fabric of the rural landscape. For the sake of clarity we will focus here on the sacral sites in the landscape.¹ Our sources are provincial laws and other written texts (unfortunately often unreliable and dating from much later), place names, and archaeological finds and sites.

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Map 3. Map of places mentioned in the text.
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On the basis of a number of agglomerations of ‘cultic’ place names in small areas, Stefan Brink has suggested that these be called ‘sacral landscapes’ — that is, ‘small areas in the landscape in which cultic activities were concentrated’ (Brink 1997: 431) — and he has emphasized that myths were connected to features in the landscape (Brink 2001: 79–88). In this paper we will use ‘sacral landscape’ as a broader framework to study important aspects of every encultured landscape, the manifestations (ancient monuments, place names) of the populations’ religious beliefs, as well as myths, narratives, rituals, and so on (Vikstrand 2001: 28; Vikstrand 2002b). Sacral sites, their contexts, and interrelations among them constitute the sacral landscape.

Sacral places are mentioned in Norse written sources and, since these represent a west-Nordic, high medieval society and its perception of west-Nordic Viking societies, their relevance is problematic to early medieval contexts in eastern and southern Scandinavia. Accordingly, other sources are to be preferred. Some places have sacral names and have a regional representativity, but dating is a problem. In contrast, the archaeological discovery of central places (see Map 3), where their sacrality is a constituent element of their identity, has opened up the study of both the space and time of sacral landscapes in early medieval Scandinavia.

Before the sacral character of central places began to be investigated and understood, it was considered more or less impossible to study heathen cults in times not illuminated by the Icelandic written sources. As a consequence of the retrospective stance inherent in the concept of 'pre-Christian religion', the chronological perspective is restricted to the Viking Age. Thus, when a Nordic research commission in 1985 ended its investigation into 'pre-Christian Nordic religion', it concluded logically 'that the textual material is still the most important source and for this reason it is natural to emphasize the Viking Age and its religion' (translated after Johansen 1989: 8). In this way, archaeology was neglected. Now, twenty years later, archaeology has proven that the commission erred: 'Since the contextual turn in the 1980s and 1990s, the outlook on materiality has changed [...]. Objects, buildings, and entire landscapes are regarded as active elements' (Andrén, Jennbert, and Raudvere 2006: 13). Today sites like Gudme, Sorte Muld, and Uppåkra demonstrate a sacral continuity back to the Roman Iron Age. Archaeology has given sacral place names a new content, and they are now taken more seriously as evidence of sacral places. Archaeology has also demonstrated that it was not far between places, some small, some large, where rituals and cult were performed.

The discovery of so-called central places in the 1980s and early 1990s has changed our view of Scandinavia during the second half of the first millennium AD. Instead of an archaic social order, a 'barbaric' civilization appears (Andrén 1998: 144, 148). The understanding of central places was an important prerequisite when Scandinavian archaeologists subsequently began to write about concepts such as sacral landscapes, power landscapes, and mental landscapes (Näsman and Roesdahl 1993: 183–84). Today, when concepts such as sacral landscapes, central places, and elite residences are used in ways which are considered to be self-evident and within the sphere of common knowledge, it is important to remember how and when the discussion began. Therefore this paper begins with a discussion of what the concept of 'central place' now covers, twenty years after it was introduced as a term for a then-new phenomenon

in the field of first-millennium Danish archaeological investigations into rich settlement sites (Näsman 1991a).

In the 1980s the use of a new tool, the metal detector, led to discoveries of a large number of new sites, all characterized by many metal finds (Petersen 1991). At first archaeologists were at a loss to decide how these sites should be interpreted. Initially, many argued that the finds represented ploughed-up cemeteries, but soon it was realized that they came from settlements, almost without exception.

In 1989 a number of Nordic archaeologists gathered to discuss the theme 'social organization and regional variation' (Fabech and Ringtved 1991). A discussion about the relationship between the concepts of 'region' and 'centre' was of course a central aspect of this discussion. It was concluded that Gudme on Funen (see below) was the most convincing example of a centre that could be identified from southern Scandinavia. The term 'centre complex' was used to characterize Gudme, since it was noticed that the central functions were distributed on a number of sites in a small settled country area. On the basis of the Gudme centre complex, an operative archaeological definition was suggested as 'an associated complex of sites performing functions necessary for maintenance of the social order' (Näsman 1991a: 333).

This discussion was continued in the project 'From Tribe to State in Denmark' (Mortensen and Rasmussen 1991), and the concept 'central place' was reintroduced in Nordic Migration- and Merovingian-period archaeology (Näsman 1991b: 169–73, 177). Originally a geographical concept used to analyse a twentieth-century urban setting (Christaller 1933), it was now presented as a neutral concept to designate a new settlement type (Fabech 1997; Fabech 1999b). The aim is to bring together overlapping terms such as centre of wealth, aristocratic residence, magnate manor, magnate farm, centre of power, cult site, sanctuary, and so on, and make them analysable. The concept encompasses settlements with rich and varied find material. It covers complex, multi-functional sites, which fulfilled various functions and took place in more than one spot. Besides a centre of power with a residence-cum-hall and production areas, one finds ordinary farmhouses, a cult-building/shrine, sacrificial sites, a *ping* site (thing), cemeteries, and trading places. While many different functions are gathered in urban communities, it is characteristic of central places that the functions are found scattered in the landscape, which was divided up naturally by wetland areas, forests, hills, and ridges. This arrangement means that the central place organized and constructed its surroundings as an ideal landscape. Such clusters can consequently be called 'central place complexes' (Brink 1996c: 238).

Central places provide us with an understanding of the significance of the hall as the centre of ideal life with features such as ceremonies, ritual meals, and gift giving (Herschend 1993; Herschend 1997; Herschend 1998: 14–51; Herschend 2009: 153–54, 159, 213, 251–60, 279). This concept characterizes places with very different scopes, from super-regional sites combining functions concerned with trade and crafts with those attached to power and sacredness (Gudme, Helgö, Sorte Muld, Uppåkra, Vå) to lower-level centres such as farmsteads (today we would term them ‘residences’) of regional and local magnates (Dankirke, Dejbjerg, Lejre, Slöinge).

Another contributing element in the development of archaeological landscape studies was the meeting in the 1970s of Danish settlement archaeology and a Swedish tradition of historic geography in both archaeology and human geography (Fabeck and others 1999: 15–28). Out of this came a new, multidisciplinary approach to landscape archaeology that incorporated scholarly fields such as onomastics, geography, and history of religion.

The concept ‘central place’ can be applied to the settlement pattern of different European regions, but in every region, the concept has its specific meaning. In the northern Frankish area, for example, the post-Roman and Christian setting produced central places with constituents similar to, but not identical to, those of Scandinavian central places (de Jong and Theuvs 2001: 534).

Gudme

Gudme is the mother of all central places in Scandinavian archaeology. Gudme was discovered in the late nineteenth century by Chamberlain Sehested as a site with exceptional finds. One hundred years later, new finds made in the 1980s with the use of metal detectors attracted new attention. Excavations followed, and Gudme became well known as a site with excellent finds (Thrane 1987; Thrane 1988; research history in Nielsen, Randsborg, and Thrane 1994: 9–21). The rich finds from Gudme clearly reveal that political power and cult activity must have been integrated constituents that gave Gudme its extraordinary significance.

Most finds are recorded between the Gudme Lake and the coast north of Lundeborg. The many finds come from a large settlement area to the east of the present church village. The site consisted of a large manor and several smaller farms, as well as workshops of various handicrafts. The site flourished from the fourth to the sixth centuries, but there is continuous settlement in the area up to the present day. Three surrounding hills all have sacral place names. On the coast north of Lundeborg, a contemporary market and landing site was situated

on the shore ridge. Other larger and smaller sites occur both along the coast and inland. The observation that the finds are distributed across many sites spread over a large area, and that they represent many different functions, was used in the first attempt to define the concept 'central place' (Näsman 1991a; Näsman 1991b).

Gudme and Hauck

The gold bracteates found at Gudme brought Karl Hauck, the German historian, into the Gudme project. His approach was decisive but has nevertheless often been overlooked. He is primarily known for his speculative and controversial studies of bracteate iconography and iconology. However, we find that his most important contribution is the demonstration of links between archaeological find spots and place names in first millennium landscapes. In maps he illustrated the coincidences between sacral place names and gold bracteates in Scandinavia and compared them with the relationship between bishop seats and late Merovingian cruciform bracteates in the Upper Rhine Basin (Hauck 1984). This is obvious at Gudme, but in fact one has to consider the whole region of Funen to understand the character of the centre (Hauck 1987; Hauck 1992a; Hauck 1994; Hauck 1998). His observation showed that gold bracteates and other gold finds could be used to indicate the presence of sacral centres.

A subsequent study of the four sacral names *Gudme*, *Gudbjerg*, *Albjerg*, and *Galdbjerg* demonstrated the significance of place names as an important supplementary source material (Sørensen 1985). Place names were soon included in archaeological maps in order to try to trace central places (Fabech 1991: fig. 9, p. 297; Ringtved 1991: fig. 35, p. 66). Being linguistic sources, place names also actualized other written sources on pre-Christian society.

Dankirke and Sorte Muld

Before the description of Gudme-Lundeborg as a central place complex, a site like Dankirke in South Jutland was simply interpreted as a trading post (Jensen 1991), as were many other sites. Stig Jensen presented a model of a settlement pattern in four tiers: (1) villages, (2) trading places (= Dankirke), (3) iron-extraction sites, and (4) economic/political centres. A tier-4 centre had not been found in South Jutland at that time (and still has not). An alternative interpretation suggested that Dankirke was a magnate manor and regional centre (Näsman 1991b: 171).

In her first comprehensive study of the settlement complex of Sorte Muld in Bornholm, Margrethe Watt summarized the evidence in four points: (1) the site was a permanent settlement with mixed economy including stock raising, fishing, and specialized handicrafts, (2) its location close to a coast with natural harbours indicates that the site functioned as a marketplace, (3) many small finds demonstrate a function as regional cult centre, and (4) the place was the seat of a local chieftain or petty king. The Sorte Muld complex is called a primary centre on Bornholm with secondary centres spread over the island. Normal rural production sites form the social base. Thus a social hierarchy in three levels was reconstructed (Watt 1991: 105, 107).

In light of the Gudme investigations, Danish sites such as Dankirke, Sorte Muld, and several others (such as Dejbjerg, Lejre, Stentinget, and Tissø) have now been integrated in the discussion about central places and their character.

Helgö

In contrast, the rich Migration-period site discovered in 1950 on Helgö (meaning 'sacred island') in Lake Mälaren has not really found its position in the discussion yet. Excavations revealed several exotic imports, as well as a large amount of material demonstrating that various craft activities took place here. The sacredness of Helgö, vividly described by Holmqvist in popular presentations (Holmqvist and Granath 1969; Holmqvist and Granath 1980), did not receive serious attention. In a summary of interpretations from 1961 to 1974 the sacred nature of the site is not even mentioned (Lundström 1988a). The varied and rich material of Helgö was difficult to interpret because other places of similar character were unknown before the Viking Age. Since the discussion of how to interpret the site took place in a period when archaeological analyses in northern Europe were dominated by economy, trade, and craft production, it was natural to consider Helgö as a pre-urban predecessor of the Viking Age 'town' Birka, situated on an island not far away. It is characteristic of the time that Wilhelm Holmqvist, the excavator of Helgö, in the influential publication 'Vor- und Frühformen der europäischen Stadt im Mittelalter' entitled his paper 'Helgö, eine Vorform der Stadt?' (Helgö, an urban precursor) (Holmqvist 1974).

The continued confusion is well illustrated by the divergent opinions in 'Thirteen Studies on Helgö' (Lundström 1988b). Several of the contributors discussed the central functions of Helgö, but the publication got stuck in problematic pre-urban perspectives. The thirteen studies on Helgö came too early to profit from the new results of Danish archaeology at Gudme and Lundeborg. Only years after Gudme had been established as a model, promising attempts

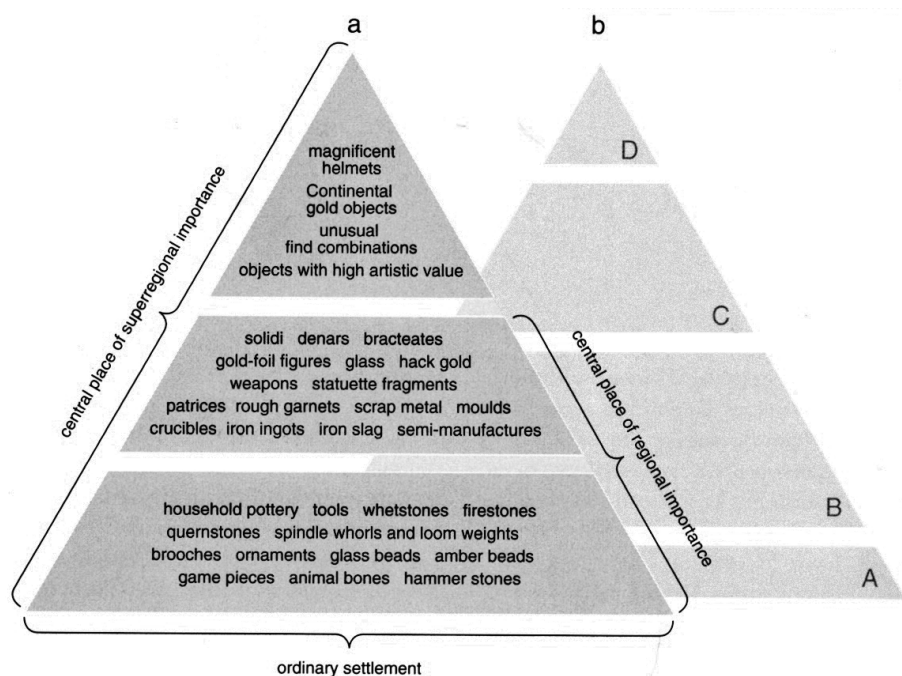


Figure 5. (a) A three-tier model based on small finds from South Scandinavian settlements.

(b) A four-tier model by Widgren of agrarian settlements based on excavations.

After Fabech 1999a. Reproduced with permission.

have been made to study Helgö in the perspective of South Scandinavian central places (Fabech and Ringtved 1995; Zachrisson 2004; Hjärthner-Holdar, Magnus, Lamm 2008).

Definitions and Models of Central Places

Various definitions of the archaeological concept of 'central place' have been put forward based on the Scandinavian evidence of archaeological records, topography, and place names — thus making a multidisciplinary approach necessary. A set of criteria has proven to be applicable in understanding Migration-period central places in Denmark (Fabech and Ringtved 1995: fig. 7, p. 19; Fabech 1999b: fig. 5, p. 41). On the basis of small finds from many settlements in Denmark, an attempt was made to establish a social and political settlement hierarchy using find types and their functions (see Figure 5). Three levels

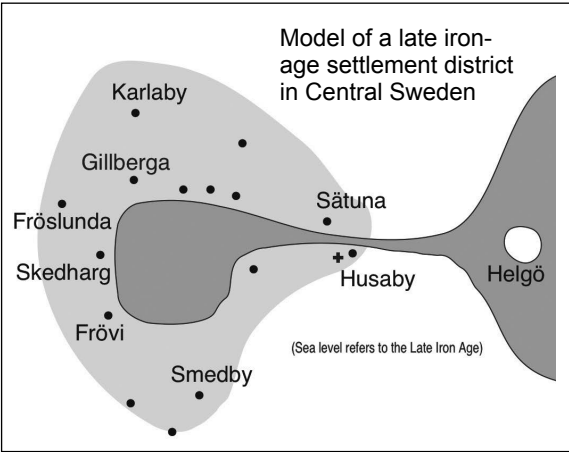
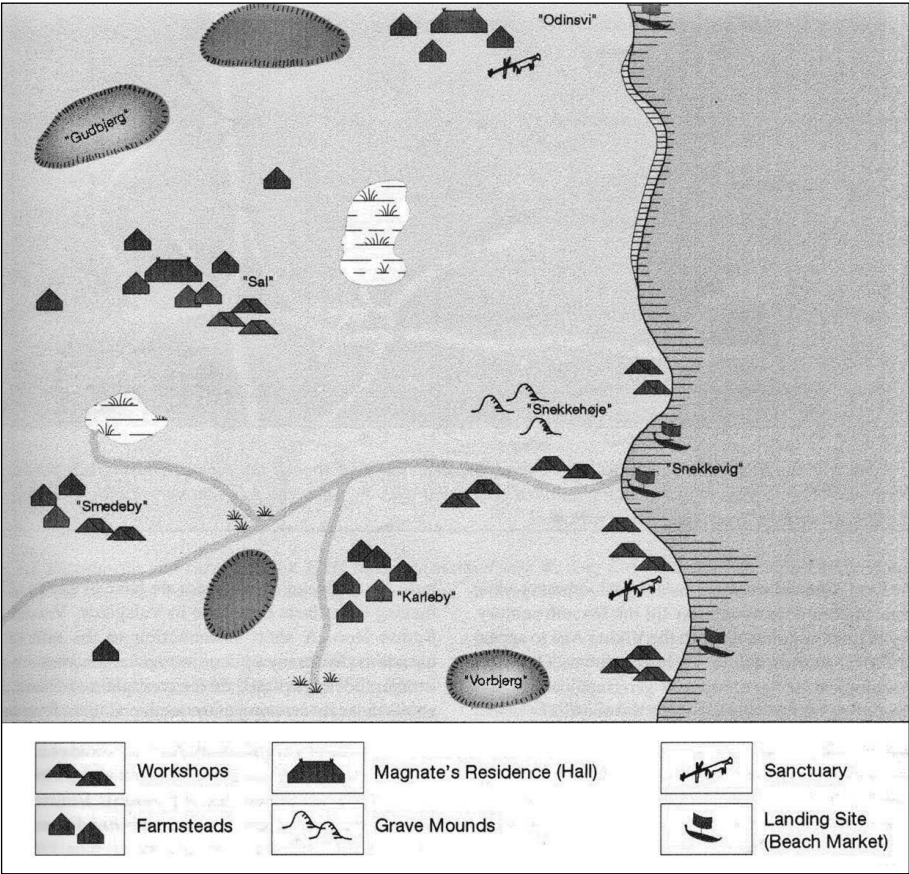


Figure 6. (Left) A model of a central place complex based on place names. After Brink 1999. (Below) A model of a central place complex based on archaeology and place names. After Fabech 1999b. Reproduced with permission.



were distinguished: (1) an exclusive top level of super-regional centres, (2) a larger number of regional and local centres (it was not possible to distinguish between the two), and (3) the rural production sites (farmsteads, hamlets, and villages). This simple model illustrates the obvious fact that there are few sites at the assumed super-regional level, a greater number of regional and local centres, and a large majority of ordinary rural production sites. It was of course expected that the simple three-tier model would be refined in coming years, with the material that appears on sites of the middle level needing further study in particular. However, thus far, the model has served its function well without further subdivisions (see Fabech 1999a: fig. 1, p. 456).

Mats Widgren, the historical geographer, has presented a four-tier structure of agrarian settlements (Widgren 1998: 290). At the base are found poor settlements of unfree and dependent people, followed by the largest group of free farmsteads. The top level is characterized by sites with large households, with unfree hands and many animals. This top level is defined by splendid small finds and workshop debris. Both models demonstrate that artefacts reveal the upper echelon of society, while investigations of dwellings show us the bottom of the elite milieu — the unfree and the dependent. Attempts to subdivide central places have been made (see for example Skre 2006b; Sørensen 2008: 273–74), but with limited success. For example, the so-called workshop sites (*værkstedspladser*; see Sørensen 2000: 53–55; Tornbjerg 2002) are more likely to be the craft constituent of a central place of ‘normal’ type. Still, large differences in the quality of information make real comparisons of different sites virtually impossible. Finds come from metal detecting, surface collections, or excavations. The extent of total site area that has been excavated varies considerably. An interesting suggestion by Per Vikstrand (Vikstrand 2001: 43) is that we might distinguish between *communal* and *aristocratic* central places. The former is not dominated by a single actor, while this is the case with the latter.

It must be emphasized that the ‘pyramid’ was intended to be a tool to sort out settlement materials and make a first subdivision of settlements, but the model must not be used to illustrate the social or spatial relations between settlements of different function and significance. Instead, spatial models such as those published by Brink (Brink 1999; see Figure 6a) and Fabech (Fabech 1999b; see Figure 6b) demonstrate the intricacy of relations between different sites within a central place complex.

The leaders of the elite families in such a complex were constituents in a network of power relations, friendly as well as hostile, within a society in constant flux. Within each central place complex the relations were both vertical and horizontal — most likely the relations between different complexes were

mainly horizontal (Wes 1992; Fabech 1999a: fig. 2, p. 458). Recent criticism (Anglert and others 2006: 21–22) of the ‘central place pyramid’ as a hierarchical social model is — in our opinion — based on misreadings and misunderstandings. Critics discuss the archaeological central-place concept from a medieval urban vantage point and consequently with the dangerous teleological perspective inherent in the concept of pre-urban.² The concept ‘non-urban places of trade and crafts’ has recently been applied to central places (Skre 2008: 86), a concept which reveals a neglect of the significance of power and sacrality at central places and which underestimates the position of central places in the development of Scandinavian polities. They are not agrarian settlements, nor are they markets or ‘early towns’. They appear to be sites where objects and other values were transformed, ritually or in other ways. Here socially significant ‘tournaments of value’ took place that transgressed ‘trade and crafts’ considerably (Arjun Appadurai’s concept as interpreted by Theuvs 2001: 203–04).

In contrast, Anders Andrén (Andrén 1998) has pointed out how the discovery of central places has profoundly changed our understanding of Iron-Age society. Central places differ both from contemporary normal agrarian sites and from medieval towns. He emphasizes the impact of late-Roman urban culture, concluding that Scandinavian central places imitated Roman towns and may be labelled ‘prehistoric towns’ (Andrén 1998: 148). This must not be understood too literally, for Scandinavian central places are not towns. Rather, they are Scandinavian attempts to meet new societal demands on local, regional, and super-regional levels, demands created by the pull-and-push forces of the Late Roman Empire and the successor states. The Scandinavians answered the challenge with a new settlement type, developed on the basis of the traditional structure of rural settlements, supplemented with increased emphasis on central functions. The inspiration came not only from Roman towns, but also from other types of Roman centres such as villas and forts, as well as elite residences and monasteries in the successor states.

Social relations can be assumed to be vital when settlements are organized in a landscape. Based on written sources, Frands Herschend mapped how a social landscape developed during the Viking-Age *landnám* (settlement) in Iceland (Herschend 1994). Two stories illustrate how the elite arranged their residence and dominion in the landscape. This arrangement took place in a virgin terrain,

² Their application of the concept ‘heterarchy’ does not contribute anything to an understanding of the central places which is not already present in the studies of Brink, Fabech, Herschend, and Näsman. This lack of explanation makes their own model (Anglert and others 2006: fig. 4) incomprehensible.

but the stories reflect a way of thinking that may have been the backdrop to how settlement patterns developed in Scandinavia also. In order to understand the function and significance of any settlement, the Icelandic *landnám* stories emphasize that one has to investigate the surrounding context (Fabech 1999b: 42). The complex character of central places makes it necessary to analyse their landscape setting.

Studies by the Swedish place-name scholar Lars Hellberg have indicated that some place-name complexes could be interpreted as administrative centres (Hellberg 1967; Hellberg 1979; Hellberg 1986). At a number of sites,³ new archaeological observations were used to reinterpret the context of the place names, thereby contributing to a better understanding of the functional variation of place names, and thus cooperation between archaeologists and place-name researchers became fundamental. As a result, general models were tentatively developed to summarize the general traits of central place complexes. Stefan Brink published a model of particular relevance for central Sweden based primarily on place names (Brink 1999; see Figure 6a), while a model primarily based on archaeological sites and more relevant for southern Scandinavia was published by Charlotte Fabech (Fabech 1999b; see Figure 6b).

After this phase of sorting source materials, definitions as well as social and spatial models were present and became widely used. The studies of settlement hierarchies and spatial patterns opened new social and political perspectives for a discussion of mentality, power, and politics in Scandinavia, as well as a new scene of interpretation in Scandinavian archaeology (Baudou 2004: 326). Processual archaeology had put a lid on historical interpretation for a short period, a tradition that was well established in Scandinavian archaeology. Nonetheless, the post-processual criticism of processual archaeology made broad, contextual interpretations acceptable again. In a way, many interpretative publications of the 1990s and 2000s resemble what was written by Scandinavian archaeologists in the early twentieth century, but now without the nationalistic perspective.

Examples of new perspectives include the following: Frands Herschend's studies of the 'life in the hall' and 'the good human' (Herschend 1993; Herschend 1997; Herschend 1998; Herschend 2009); Lotte Hedeager's attempt to see

³ For example in Sweden: Borg (Nielsen 1997), Helgö (Zachrisson 2004 and references), Ravlunda (Fabech 1999a), Slöinge (Lundqvist 1997), [Old] Uppsala (Nordahl 1996; Andrén 2005: 113–14), and Uppåkra (Larsson and Lenntorp 2004). In Denmark: Gudme (Nielsen, Randsborg, and Thrane 1994), Dankirke (Hansen 1989; Hansen 1990), Dejbjerg (Hansen 1996), Lejre (Christensen 1993), Sorte Muld (Adamsen and others 2008), Strøby (Tornbjerg 1998), and Tissø (Jørgensen 2008).

Gudme as 'a reconstruction of the pre-Christian universe, contextualizing the archaeological and written records as different expressions of a single cosmological model' (Hedeager 2002: 3, abstract; see also Hedeager 2001; Hedeager 2004); Bengt Söderberg's study of 'aristocratic space' (Söderberg 2005: 443–56); and Tore Artelius and Mats Anglert's attempt to understand the sacred grove at Lunda as a place of memory (Artelius and Anglert 2008).

Sacral Landscapes

Soon after central place complexes had been defined and their sacredness identified, the concept 'sacral landscape' began to be used, but it was difficult to give it content. It proved not to be easy to materialize the immaterial. Reconstructions of heathen cosmology based on Aaron Gurevich's and later Kirsten Hastrup's analyses of medieval Icelandic texts have been used as models of sacral landscapes, but the simple *Midgård-Utgård* model has been criticized by Margaret Clunies Ross (Clunies Ross 1998: 59–66), Rudolf Simek (Simek 1993: 54, 255), and Stefan Brink (Brink 2004: 292–98; see also Skre 2006a: 448). Brink concludes that it is impossible to make a spatial logic out of the mythical rooms and places of the Icelandic sources. We will refrain from the use of Norse cosmology and instead turn to the evidence offered by archaeological records and place names.

Archaeological finds are made at various places in the landscape. Content and context are our guides to find the sacral in the landscape. Common find types are graves and settlements. Graves are usually considered as expressions of ritual and religion, while settlements are normally seen as secular. A heterogeneous and difficult category is labelled 'depositions'. In archaeology they are often too quickly subdivided into either secular treasures/hoards or given a sacral interpretation, usually as offerings. We will use the concept 'deposition', since it covers both secular and sacral contexts, as well as finds that include both sacral and secular intentions (Fabeck 2006). The broad concept 'ritual deposition' helps us to identify more finds of interest in a sacral landscape than what can be gleaned from the traditional focus on the more limited category of 'offerings'. Many different places served the communication between humanity and the other world in various ways.

Any place where the holy appeared could become sacral. Consequently, one has to expect a broad spectrum of sites associated with the holy (Vikstrand 2001: 20–24; Andrén 2002). Some sites were important in the mythical history of the society, while elsewhere, victories made many battlefields sacral. Other sites were used for sacrifices to gods, some served as gateways to the

spiritual world, and at some, one could communicate with ancestors. Initiation rites had their own sites. Some sites were public and well known; others were reserved for the few and secret. Thus sacral sites probably varied considerably in form, size, and location.

When the holy appeared to people, a hierophany took place. This is the manifestation or appearance of the holy to human beings — an event that took place. The important archaeological problem is the difficulty of localizing these sites where hierophanies took place at ‘the interface of the earthly and supernatural worlds’ (Green 1995: 90). Hierophanies can take place anywhere, so in principle any place can be sacral. However, in reality, people preferred some landscape settings over others.

Since contemporary descriptions or maps are lacking, one has to reconstruct sacral landscapes on the basis of dispersed evidence and indications. Written sources from the period after the conversion give examples of heathen sacral places and phenomena that still were remembered (Nilsson 1992: 27–39; Hultgård 1996). These are mentioned in the Scandinavian provincial laws (dating from the eleventh to the thirteenth centuries) in connection with a ban on worship and offering to the old gods. Cult places mentioned are stony outcrops (*hørg/harg*), stones (*stenar*), barrows (*haugar*), groves (*bult, lund*), stave fences (*stafgarða*), and sanctuaries (*vi*). It was forbidden to erect staves (*stafr*) or platforms (*stallr*), obviously used in the heathen cult. In his second-hand description of [Old] Uppsala, Adam of Bremen mentioned in his *History of the Archbishops of Hamburg-Bremen* a holy well and a holy grove in which every tree had divine power (Book IV, chaps 26–27). In a large house (*triclinium*), idols were kept of the three gods, Odin, Tor, and Frö. The Icelandic saga texts are late and do not contribute much, but they describe how rituals also were performed indoors and that an offer altar (*stalli*) could be found in some houses.

Sites mentioned in written sources all seem to be connected to a cultural landscape. Natural places are stony outcrops, stones, groves, and a single well, while constructed places are houses used in the cult, barrows, stave fences, and sanctuaries, as well as some of the *hargs*. To evaluate whether the medieval texts give a trustworthy picture of the sacral landscape of the heathens one has to compare them to the picture presented by place names and archaeology.

Many sacral place names consist of or include words signifying natural features (Foote and Wilson 1970: 393–98; Strid 1993; Brink 1996c; Brink 1997; Brink 2001; Vikstrand 2001; Hultgård 2008: 217): woodland (*ved, lund*), trees like oak (*ege*) and beech (*bøge*), hills (*berg, fjall*), islands (*ey*), headlands (*nes*), bays (*vik*), rivers (*á*), and lakes (*sjór, sæ*). It is uncertain whether stony outcrops (*harg*) and haven (*havn*) are natural or constructed.

Other sacral place names consist of or include words that allude to human land-use (pasture *vin*, *vang* or crop-field *akr*) — or to human settlement (home *hjem*, farmstead *bo*, house *hus*, or hall *sal*) — or specifically a cult place (sanctuary *hov*, *vi*). Other constructed places are indicated by names with mound (*haugr*), stave (*stafr*), and enclosures (*tun*). Names such as *harg* and *havn* can denote either natural or constructed places.

An important difference in comparison to the medieval written sources is that more types of natural places occur among the place names: hills, islands, headlands, bays, rivers, and lakes. The written texts are from the eleventh to the thirteenth centuries and consequently after the conversion. The place names reflect earlier situations — some sacral places might have been named hundreds of years earlier, during the Roman Iron Age or the Migration period. Others are later, from the Merovingian period and the Viking Age, but all names were given before the conversion.

The corpus of archaeological material is very large but also heterogeneous — religious and secular life were interlaced and inseparable (see Bradley 2005: 3–40). To be able to distinguish between ‘normal’ and sacral sites one has to identify elements of cult and ritual, but the shifting quality of the archaeological records at different sites often makes this difficult. However, some recently investigated sites have a very high qualitative value. Limited space allows only a few examples representing different landscape settings.

Wetlands

Large tracts of northern Europe were made impenetrable by mystical and dangerous bogs and lakes. Bogs and lakes have been closely associated with people’s notions of fate, disease and death, and so on. Through a body of water one could approach and communicate with the otherworld, so it is no wonder that lakes have been used for sacrifices through the ages and worldwide. In southern Scandinavia the most common depositions include ceramic vessels (probably containing food), corpses of sacrificed animals and humans, jewellery, metal vessels, tools, and weapons (Kaul 2003). Shores could be reinforced, and the sites marked with erected wooden idols and staves (see Figure 7). However, buildings or similarly advanced constructions have not been found thus far, and thus the places seem to have preserved their character of being ‘natural’. Many are interpreted as being the result of fertility rites. An illustrative example is the small lake *Käringsjön* which was used for offerings in the Late Roman Iron Age (Arbman 1945; Carlie 1998).



Figure 7. A reconstruction demonstrating how a wooden idol could have been placed on a cairn at a bog. Drawing by Margrethe Petrine Jansen, based on the idol from Broddenbjerg, held in København, Nationalmuseet, and excavations at Rosbjerggård, Jutland. After Fischer 2007: 162. Reproduced with permission.

Among the most remarkable Scandinavian finds from lakes are the many offerings of warriors' gear from the Roman Iron Age and the Migration period (Jørgensen, Storgaard, and Thomsen 2003a; Jørgensen, Storgaard, and Thomsen 2003b; Fabech 2009). The generally accepted interpretation is that they represent offerings of weapons and equipment gathered from a battlefield somewhere in the surrounding area and are considered to be the result of rituals performed to thank the gods for victory. Some sites were reused for new offerings after a break of several generations. Perhaps regularly performed ceremonies at the lakes can explain why the places were not forgotten. In southern Scandinavia the large deposits of weaponry in lakes ended in the sixth century. Recent finds made at Uppåkra in Scania (Helgesson 2004) indicate that weapon rituals were also performed at the residences of the nobility. When such finds are made at elite residences in central places, it reveals that the residences were as sacral as the old bogs (Herschend 2002; Herschend 2009: 153, 255–56, 369–77).

The well-preserved and well-excavated weapon deposits are excellent sources of information for studies of complex rituals. However, the archaeological record of the deposits represents only the last link in a long chain of events.

We have to imagine a ritual drama beginning at the battlefield where the weapons and equipment were gathered, and then movement (perhaps a procession) down to the shores of a holy lake/bog. During complicated ceremonies, weapons were treated in various ways. Weapon dances and ritual fencing are examples of possible rituals, plausibly supervised by cult leaders (see Brink 1996c: 266–68; Sundqvist 2007: 21–48; Sundqvist 2008). Perhaps participants from the battlefield performed rituals representing decisive moments from the battle. Possibly both the battlefield and subsequent offering site stayed in the collective memory of society as related holy places.

The offered weapons and equipment are presented in impressive publications (see for example Ilkjær 1990–2006: iv–x). Scholars have focused their attention on the description, classification, and dating of the finds. Careful studies of find circumstances are presented, but the wider landscape context of the finds has unfortunately been neglected. Consequently it is difficult to visualize the surrounding sacral landscape.

An exception is the study of Skedemosse, where Ulf Erik Hagberg insisted that the finds must be understood as a part of a larger context (Hagberg 1967–77: II, 88–130; see Näsman 2001: 318–19). The relevance of the landscape approach can be illustrated by Tacitus's story about the cult of Nerthus (Tacitus, *Germania*, chap. 40), one of very few contemporary descriptions of a whole ritual and its landscape. The ritual was not limited to the place where Nerthus's wagon was hidden, but rather an entire landscape was involved. It started in a holy grove on an island and from there the goddess was drawn on a consecrated wagon to all the places she deemed worthy of a visit. After a ritual that took place over several days, the accompanying priest brought her back to her temple. Both idol and wagon were washed in a hidden lake, and the slaves who washed her were engulfed by the lake.

Finds in lakes or bogs are often called 'offerings'. However, the concept of 'deposition' is preferable since it covers both secular and sacral contexts, as well as finds that include sacral and secular intentions. An example of a secular practice with a sacral intention is the so-called Odin's Law, which says that one will enjoy in the afterlife what one has hidden while alive. Here a normal secular hoarding practice is combined with religious beliefs. A number of objects may have been deposited because of their 'biography' — perhaps one should talk about ritual depositions without religious connotations. For instance, when burial mounds or lakes were chosen for deposition, the sites were chosen because they symbolize tradition. Loaded objects were given to ancestors or gods for safe keeping at sites associated with the old society (Fabeck 2006). A similar phenomenon is known in connection with medieval swords (Geibig 1991).

When a sword closely attached to its owner could not be used by its owner any longer, he could prevent it from falling into the wrong hands by depositing it in a lake. Such a sword thrown in water is not an offering, but reflects a way in which the sword could be honoured.

Springs

The fourth- to seventh-century ring fort at *Eketorp* on Öland was a fortified village with thirteen farms with dwelling houses, byres, stores, and workshops. In the centre, three houses have been identified tentatively as the residence of the commander. The fort was placed on the eastern limit of the Great Alvar plain where a spring feeds into a now-drained wetland. Here, ritual depositions have taken place — hazel rods and animal bones characterized by unusually high frequencies of horse and swine skulls (Backe, Edgren, and Herschend 1993). According to ^{14}C -dates, the depositions began in the Early Roman Iron Age and continued until the Viking Age, with emphasis on the seventh century. The depositions seem to have begun before the first fort was built in the fourth century. Access to fresh water was probably the main reason for placing a fort here, but the site obviously served as an assembly place before that. Most of the ^{14}C -dates position the main occupation phase of the fort in the fifth to seventh centuries. The depositions continued after the fort was deserted in the seventh century.

On a large open area in front of the magnate buildings, a hoard of fifteen impressed gold-foil figures and five small gold rods was found (Lamm 2004: 65–66).⁴ During the excavation, this find was interpreted as an offering. The stone construction where they were found was interpreted as the remains of a stone cist, but now, knowing that a sanctuary was a constituent of an elite residence, we have re-examined the documentation. Comparing what was then considered to be a stone cist with recently excavated structures that are assumed to be sanctuaries and the depiction of an offering on a Gotlandic picture stone,⁵ it can be suggested that the stones are the support of an erected stone and are the remains of a sanctuary (see Figure 8).⁶

⁴ In Lamm's fig. 4, four finger rings and two gold strips do not belong to the hoard but represent other finds from the Eketorp ring fort.

⁵ Stora Hammars I in Lärbo. Lindqvist 1941–42, 1: fig. 81, pl. 27; Nylén and Lamm 1988: 63.

⁶ In an earlier paper (Fabech 2006) the Eketorp construction was tentatively identified as a *harg*, but today we think that archaeologists were too hasty in their application of concepts taken from medieval sources on various archaeological remains after pagan rituals. Such identifications now seem premature and should await a multidisciplinary discussion involving linguists, onomasticians, historians, and historians of religion.

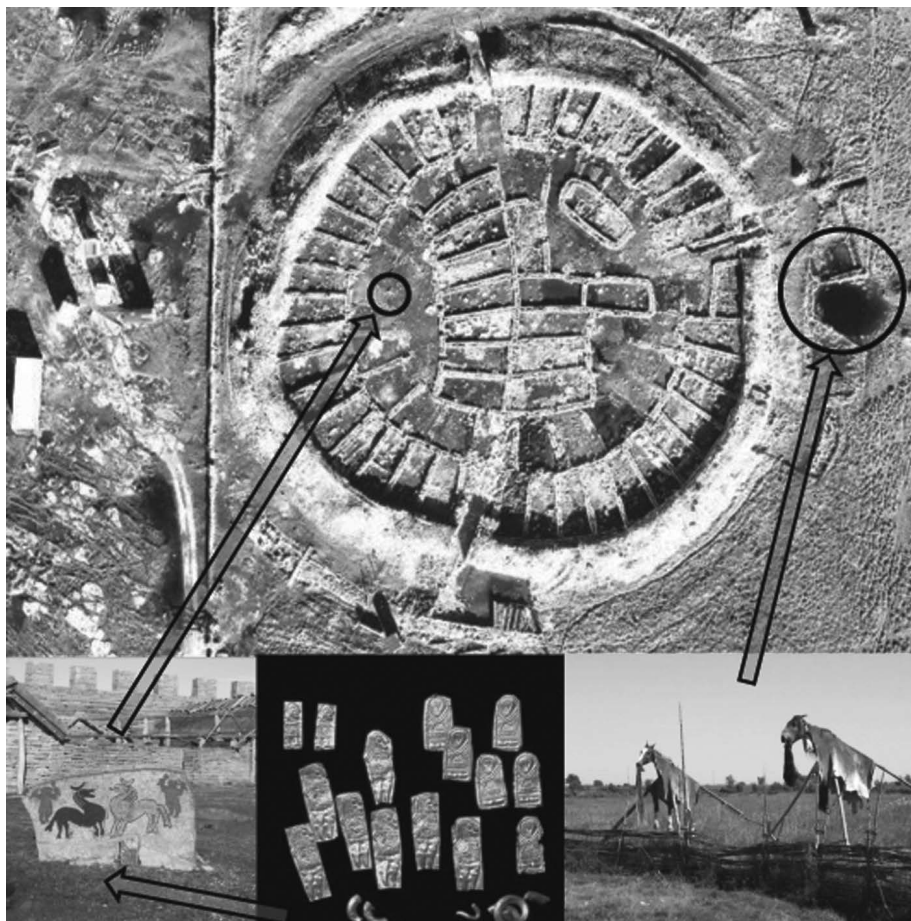


Figure 8. Air photo of Eketorp ring fort, Öland, 1973. In the west the place is marked where the depicted gold-foil figures were found. The erected stone is a tentative reconstruction. In the east the place is marked where the animal bones, etc. were found. After the offering of horses, heads, hides, and hooves might have been put on a stake as visualized in this reconstruction. Photos courtesy of Rune Hedgren, Eketorpsundersökningen, Gunnel Jansson, ATA, the Swedish National Heritage Board, Stockholm, and Charlotte Fabech. Reproduced with permission.

Thus two cult sites are present at Eketorp ring fort, perhaps representing stages in a complex ritual. The slaughter of sacrificed animals — *sóa* — could have been performed at the *sanctuary*. The sacrificial meal — *blót* — was prepared and eaten inside the fort. The loaded remains of the *blót* were finally deposited in the water east of the fort.

Islands

If the lakes and bogs of the weapon offerings once had sacral names, they probably lost their meaning after the sites had become obsolete. Thus the names would not have been remembered long enough to be recorded. In contrast, a few islands have both a sacral place name and significant archaeological finds (see Brink 2001: 92–96).

The well-known trade and craft centre on Helgö in Lake Mälaren has preserved its sacredness in its name: ‘holy island’. Obviously the earliest human activities on the island date from the Bronze Age or Early Iron Age and were focused on a hill on top of which stone settings and an enclosure are found (Zachrisson 2004). Permanent settlement activities did not begin until the Late Roman Iron Age and lasted up to the Viking Age. In a summary of the complicated site, Torun Zachrisson has emphasized how both structures and small finds of trade, crafts, and other settlement activities were closely associated with rituals. Among the structures, a longhouse with rich finds including gold-foil figures indicates a ritual use, and in front of a conspicuous outcrop, thick layers with plenty of finds are interpreted as an offering site. The deposit was finally covered by a triangular stone-setting with concave sides. It is not a grave, but was probably used ritually.

Among sacred islands, some are named after a specific god. Thus Fosites gave his name to the island Fositesland off the west coast of Jutland at the border between the Frisians and the Danes. A shrine devoted to Fosites was on the island. Animals living on the island were not killed, and water from a spring could only be scooped up in silence. This information is found in *De vita S. Willibrordi* (after Skovgaard-Petersen 1981: 27–28).

Two islands in Storsjön (the large lake) in Jämtland, Frösön and Norderön (see papers in Brink 1996a), are among the most interesting. Their names indicate that they were consecrated to the god Frö and the goddess Njård respectively. It is assumed that Njård is synonymous with Fröja, the sister of Frö, perhaps an indication of a cultic connection between the two islands. Below the altar of the medieval Frösö Church, excavations revealed the stump of a birch tree. Spread around it, numerous bones were found from both domesticated and wild animals. Most remarkable are bones representing at least six bears. The tree stump is considered to be part of a sacral grove used for sacrifices. That the altar was placed on top of a heathen cult site is considered in terms of cult-place continuity.

Both Lake Mälaren and Lake Storsjön are surrounded by densely settled landscapes. However, the discussions about the islands, Helgö and Frösön, and

their landscape settings result in very different pictures. Around Lake Storsjön eight settlement areas are recorded, each with a site with a sacral place name, and are considered to represent eight independent units (Vikstrand 1996). Frösön is not given a central position in a larger sacral landscape, and the cult site consequently appears to have been a local phenomenon. In contrast, Helgö is always studied in relation to its surroundings (see Holmqvist and Granath 1980; Ambrosiani 1985; Fabeck and Ringtved 1995; Zachrisson 2004). Contributing to the discussion has been Helgö's location in a border zone between the medieval administrative units Södermanland and Uppland, as well as the fact that Lake Mälaren at that time was a fjord of the Baltic Sea and served as the main communication channel for central Sweden. Remarkable small finds of sacral significance indicate that the site was of more than local importance. Not least interesting are the unique early Christian objects that were found in a ninth-century house, placed on the same terrace as an earlier house in which pagan gold-foil figures had been deposited. It seems reasonable that the island was included in a larger sacral setting.

Groves

Sacral groves are commonplace in written sources from Tacitus to Adam of Bremen. Tacitus mentions in *Germania* that the Germanic people did not keep their gods within walls, nor gave them a human appearance. Instead they consecrated the woods and groves in which their gods were (Tacitus, *Germania*, chap. 9). In the sacred groves they also kept the images and symbols they carried in battle (Tacitus, *Germania*, chap. 7). White horses kept in woods and groves were used to predict the future and they pulled a sacral wagon (Tacitus, *Germania*, chap. 10). The Semnones believed that their origin was in an ancient hallowed forest, and this forest was used for human sacrifices (Tacitus, *Germania*, chap. 39). The well-known story about the Nerthus cult (Tacitus, *Germania*, chap. 40) was quoted above. Finally, he tells us that the Nahanarvali held a grove in awe in which a priest in woman's dress presided. Here the gods 'Alci' lived but they had no images of them (Tacitus, *Germania*, chap. 43). In his *Annales* Tacitus tells us about the sacred grove in which Arminius had hung the Roman *signa* taken in the battle against Varus in AD 9 (Tacitus, *Annales*, I. 59). Germanicus visited the battlefield in AD 15 and saw the spoils of the battle. Heads were nailed to trees, and in groves nearby barbaric altars had been erected upon which Roman prisoners of war had been slaughtered (Tacitus, *Annales*, I. 61). In AD 16 Arminius planned a battle against Germanicus, and he met his allies in a holy wood (Tacitus, *Annales*, I. 12). The Frisians kept Roman

prisoners in a grove dedicated to Baduhenna (Tacitus, *Annales*, I. 73). In his *Historiae* Tacitus mentions that Civilis and other Batavian leaders planned the revolt against Rome in a sacred grove (Tacitus, *Historiae*, IV. 14).

Centuries later Procopius described how the inhabitants of Thule (Scandinavia) sacrificed humans and hung the corpses in trees or threw them in cospes (Procopius, *De Bello Gothico*, II. 15). From the late Viking Age, Adam of Bremen has given us a description of the large offerings at [Old] Uppsala. The corpses of men, dogs, and horses were hung in the trees of a holy grove near the temple (*History of the Archbishops of Hamburg-Bremen*, IV. 27).

A picture appears from the sources that emerge from over a millennium. Sacred groves were common. In groves and small woods the gods resided, and here hierophanies took place. Altars were used for sacrifices, of both animals and men. Prisoners could be kept there and some were sacrificed as well, and corpses were hung from the holy trees. Symbols and images as well as trophies were stored in the groves, and holy horses lived there. The groves could be used for gatherings by leaders who had to plan hazardous actions, and here the outcome of future events could be foretold.

In a note on holy woods and groves in Tacitus's *Germania*, J. B. Rives wrote that 'archaeological investigations can neither confirm nor disprove the literary evidence' (Tacitus *Germania*: 165). However, recent advances in archaeological investigations of sacral landscapes have now demonstrated the opposite to be the case.

At Lunda in Södermanland, a settlement with a longhouse 40 metres long has been excavated, dated from the fourth to the seventh century. Two figurines were found in a small attached building and a third south of the house, interpreted as building offerings. Nearby have been found an ordinary settlement and a cemetery. Close to the long house was a prominent hill (see Figure 9). The place name 'Lunda' and the topography tempted the excavator to believe it once had been a sacred grove. Trial trenches were opened, with sensational results (Andersson and others 2004; Andersson and Skyllberg 2008). The hill was covered by a large number of stone settings of a type normally dated to the Late Bronze Age or the Pre-Roman Iron Age. Here people had lit fires and crushed boulders. All over the hill fragmented burnt bones, small pieces of burnt clay, and tiny drops of resin were spread. Furthermore, unburnt objects in the form of colourful glass beads and edged tools had been dispersed. The activities dated by artefacts were carried out from the fifth century onwards, peaking between the seventh and ninth centuries AD. However, ¹⁴C-datings reveal activities perhaps as early as the sixth century BC, and again in the Roman Iron Age. Most ¹⁴C-datings represent the Migration and Merovingian periods.

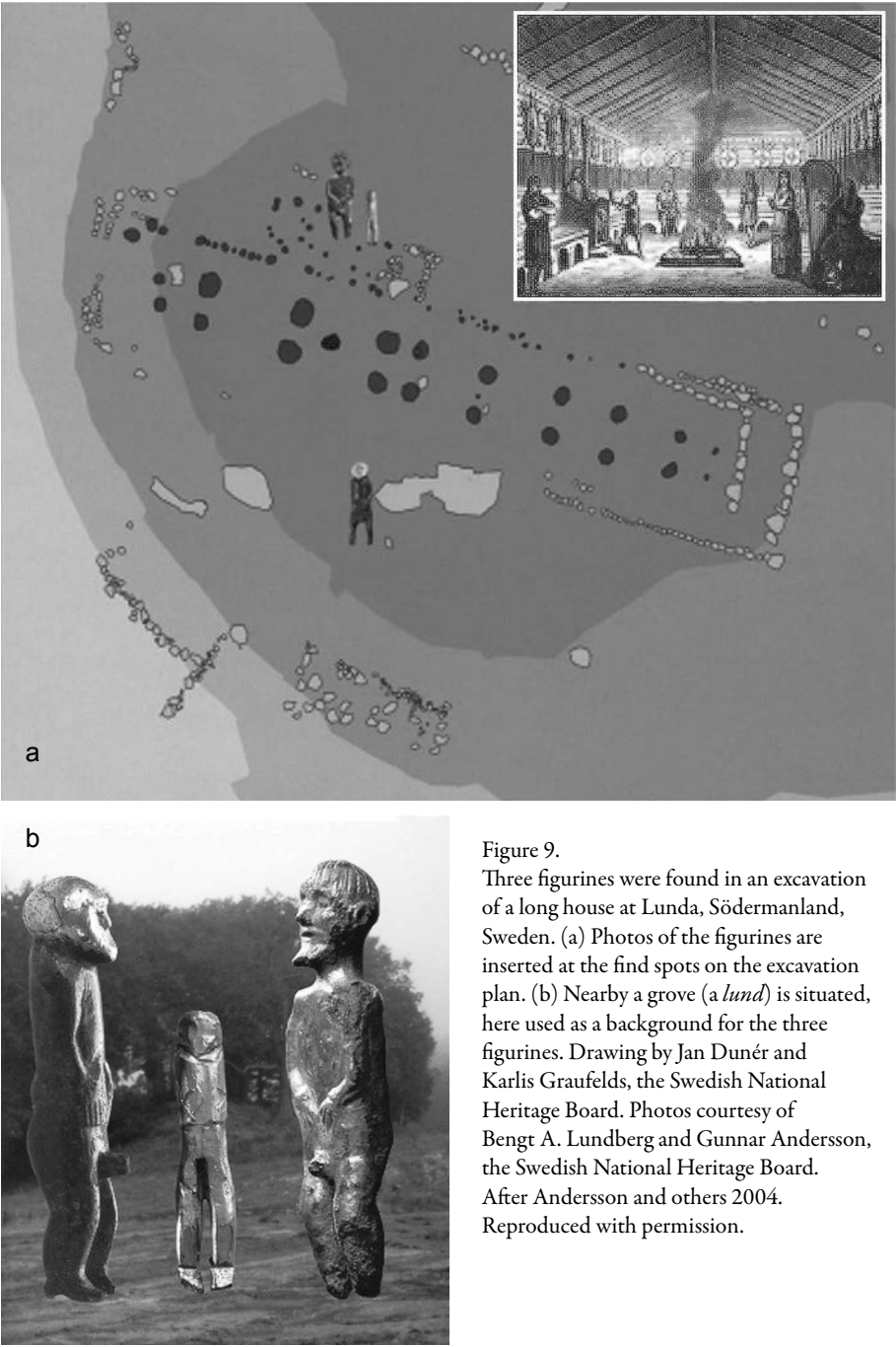


Figure 9.
Three figurines were found in an excavation of a long house at Lunda, Södermanland, Sweden. (a) Photos of the figurines are inserted at the find spots on the excavation plan. (b) Nearby a grove (a *lund*) is situated, here used as a background for the three figurines. Drawing by Jan Dunér and Karlis Graufelds, the Swedish National Heritage Board. Photos courtesy of Bengt A. Lundberg and Gunnar Andersson, the Swedish National Heritage Board. After Andersson and others 2004. Reproduced with permission.



Figure 10. Basalt outcrops at the top of a hill named 'Lunden' near the medieval church at Häglinge, Scania. The hill is the eroded remains of a volcano. Photo: Charlotte Fabech, 2008.
Reproduced with permission.

During the Bronze Age and the Pre-Roman Iron Age the hill was an island in a fjord of the Baltic. Eventually, due to the post-glacial land elevation, the hill became a peninsula during the Migration period. Probably this hill on an island/peninsula was holy in itself and later attracted the establishment of both a holy grove and a building complex (see Artelius and Anglert 2008).

It is unlikely that Lunda will remain a unique place for very long. The presence of potential sacral groves is suspected at a number of sites, but three examples will suffice here.

In Scania a few kilometres from the find spot of the famous funeral sacrifices of silver horse harnesses at Sösdala, one finds a marked hill named Lunden. It is situated close to Häglinge, a medieval church village. The place name alludes to a marked elevation, possibly the same hill that is the eroded remains of a volcano. Prominent basalt outcrops are found at the top (see Figure 10), and several cemeteries are situated in the vicinity. On the hill Lunden itself, cup marks,

clearance cairns, and stone settings are recorded. In Småland another similar phenomenon can be observed at Blackstad. Close to the medieval church one finds a hill with the name Lundbacke, on which hill a cemetery is found, as well as remains of stone walls. Old finds of burnt bone and pottery are recorded.

A legendary place in Scania is Ravlunda (Fabech 1999a). Legends tell us that here once was a town called Malestad, and that a sacral grove once lay near the mouth of the Skepparp River. In the archaeological record one can find gold bracteates, gold-foil figures, a solidus, and a golden neck-ring, as well as a Viking-Age silver hoard. South of the river, occupation layers are observed and stray finds have been discovered. Recent detector investigations have revealed a landing place and an area with remains of handicrafts. The finds range in date from *c.* 300 to *c.* 1100 AD, showing that the place was in use for about eight hundred years. North of the river, a once-large cemetery existed, the remains of which still include a large number of erected stones. Interesting field names are recorded on a cadastral map from 1827, indicating that Ravlunda was once a multifunctional central place complex. Among the names is 'Stigelund', a name that can mean 'the fenced-in grove', perhaps the grove where legends say bracteates and gold-foil figures were found.

Only archaeological investigations can show if these three 'Lunds' were also places of hierophanies with rituals like those performed in the grove at Lunda in Södermanland.

Rocky Outcrops and Erratic Blocks

That some outcrops attracted ritual activities was described above (Helgö). Many more examples could be mentioned; here it suffices to mention an old find and two recent excavations.

During work in 1935 near Göingeholm on the road between Sösdala and Häglinge in Scania, the workers found two clay pots at the top of the hill Korslidsbacken (Arne 1937). The pots were placed four metres apart at a rock outcrop. A simple pot was empty; the other had ribbed decoration and contained a hoard of jewellery: four silver brooches, fragments of nine silver clasps, and forty-seven amber beads. The jewelry dates the hoard to the Migration period. The finds do not represent graves, and it is tempting to explain the relation between rock and pots as ritual.

At Lilla Ullevi in Uppland excavations uncovered an area with two fenced-in rock outcrops (Bäck 2009). Between the two outcrops a U-shaped stone frame was found, half filled with stones. Between the two open arms a four-post construction has been placed — a wooden platform? The opening of the

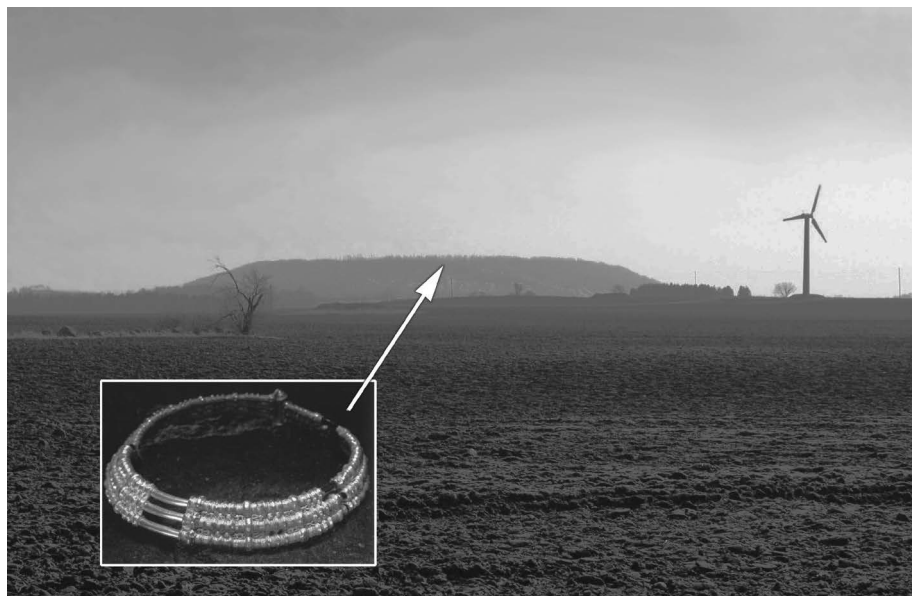


Figure 11. The table mountain Alleberg from the north, 2005.

The inserted gold collar was found near the top. Photos courtesy of Christer Åhlin, the National Historical Museum, Stockholm, and Charlotte Fabech. Reproduced with permission.

U-shape was turned against the gap between the rock outcrops. South of the construction sixty-five amulet rings of iron were found in an area with a number of post holes. The construction is dated to the seventh to eighth centuries AD and interpreted as a *barg*, plausibly part of a sanctuary (a *vi*), devoted to the god Ull (*Ullevi*). Disregarding the appropriateness of the excavators' application of concepts derived from place names and Icelandic sources, the site is most interesting. The stone construction was placed on a thick layer dated to around 200–400 AD with fireplaces and cooking pits, obviously not associated with a dwelling site. After the place was deserted in the mid-eighth century it was covered with a thick layer of earth, possibly as a kind of ritual closing.

Erratic blocks have also been used as the focus of rituals. Between a bare hill-ock and a small marsh at Abbetorp in western Östergötland a cremation cemetery was excavated that included a stone circle (Lindeblad and Petersson 2009). Some graves had grave goods including a gold finger-ring, bronze brooches, shards of glass beakers, and dress pins. These graves could be dated to the Late Roman Iron Age, the Migration period, and a few to the Merovingian period. In the cemetery, finds were made that had no clear relation to proper graves, but

are considered to be ritual depositions. Remarkable objects are a Migration-period relief brooch of excellent quality and two weights. Between the cemetery and the marsh, an area with cooking pits and hearths is interpreted as being the remains of ritual cooking and eating, possibly related to burials at the cemetery. Near the marsh, many offerings had taken place at two big boulders. Glass and amber beads, gaming pieces of glass, shards of at least three different glass beakers, and pottery were found, as well as fire-cracked stones and burnt and unburnt animal bones. The finds were distributed from the blocks out into the marsh. These activities began in the Late Roman Iron Age, culminated during the Migration period, and ended in the Merovingian period. Another site with a stone block and offerings of a similar character was excavated west of the marsh, around 100 metres away. The date is Late Roman Iron Age to Migration period, and a contemporary settlement is situated not far away. The end of the site can be explained by a major settlement shift that took place in the Merovingian period. The investigations at Abbetorp are important because here a close spatial and temporal relation was established between complex rituals associated with burials, rock out-crops, erratic boulders, hearths and cooking pits, and marshes.

Another example is found at an interesting cemetery at *Kymlinge*, Uppland, dated to the Migration and Merovingian periods (Biuw 1992: 125–35). A large number of fire-steels and amulet rings (with miniature sickles, Thor's hammers, and/or miniature fire-steels) were found randomly spread over the cemetery. In the western part of the cemetery a large erratic block was surrounded by a deposit of knives, fire-steels, and amulet rings as well as large amounts of pottery and burnt and unburnt bones. The excavator concluded that it was not a grave, and a ritual function seems probable (Zachrisson 2004: 162).

Hills

Some of the sacral groves are found on hills (see, for example, Lunda above). Both place names and archaeology indicate that hills often were the place of hierophanies (see Myrberg 2005: 103–05). The impressive table mountain Ålleberg, in Västergötland, is an obvious example (see Figure 11), where a Migration-period gold collar was found in 1827 in a quarry high up its northern slope. Unfortunately, the context of the deposition is unknown. No archaeological investigation was undertaken at the now-destroyed find spot. From Ålleberg one overlooks the whole settled region, a very old settlement area (*bygd*), and up here one might have been able to approach the gods. Neck- and arm-rings served as tokens of dignity. Some certainly followed the position, not

the person. Thus it can be surmised that the find spot reveals a holy place where the collar was used as well as deposited (Fabech 2006: 30).

The landscape of the Dejbjerg wagons in west Jutland is another example (Hansen 1996; Fabech 1997; Fabech 1999b). We can follow the settlement development from the Pre-Roman Iron Age to the present. Settlements and a local offering bog are dated to the Early Iron Age. On the hill a hamlet with a magnate residence is found, the hall of which burnt down in the sixth century AD. In the High Middle Ages a village with a nobleman's manor and church was localized here. The church was built on the same plot (*toft*) as the Migration-period magnate residence. The sacrifices in the bog, the two famous prestigious wagons, as well as pottery and some wooden objects, seem to come to an end about 400 AD. After that, activities took place on the top of the hill. Viking-Age finds indicate a continuous development from the Migration-period hall to the high-medieval manor and church. The meaning of the place name 'Dejbjerg' is unclear, but the combination of the two words 'death' and 'hill' denote something sacral.

Uppåkra is a hamlet on a flat hill south of Lund in Scania. Detector surveys and excavations have revealed that it once was a central place of great importance. Three or four barrows on the crest of the hill are believed to be earlier than the settlement, and the site has a commanding position in the very flat landscape. Thick occupation layers reveal an extraordinarily long continuity as a pagan centre, from the Roman Iron Age to the Viking Age. Plenty of small finds represent agriculture and stock raising as well as crafts and trade, that is, common functions of contemporary central places. More remarkable is the excavated hall (Larsson and Lenntorp 2004). The four roof-supporting posts of the only house measuring 13 x 6 metres had been as large as approximately one metre in diameter. Several finds are associated with its ritual functions, including gold bracteates, gold-foil figures, glass shards, and door rings. In a pit, a silver beaker and a glass bowl from around 500 AD had been ritually buried, and in the floor layers, more than one hundred gold-foil figures were found. To the north and south of the cult house, depositions of lance- and spearheads were made. The find circumstances indicate that the weapons may have been used in complicated rituals such as weapon dances, fencing, and re-enacted battles. Residential longhouses with rich finds are located nearby; taken together, the complex as a whole could be interpreted as a sanctuary (*hov*). The remarkably long continuity of the hall is unexpected and indicates a stable social structure, which, of course, does not exclude conflicts over the control of the site. Probably the maintenance of the cult has been of utmost importance for the legitimizing of political power. The place name means 'the crop-fields on high

ground', but the archaeological record of Uppåkra makes it possible to suggest that it also denoted a holy field (see Vikstrand 2001: 366–85; Vikstrand 2002a; Vikstrand 2004).

The name of the well-known central place Gudme carries the meaning 'the home of gods' or 'a place where the gods are and can be worshipped' (Jørgensen 1994; Wahlberg 2003). Today it denotes a church village, surrounded by hills with sacral names (Sørensen 1985). To the south is Albjerg (the hill with/at the sanctuary), to the west Gudbjerg (the hill dedicated to the gods), and to the north Galdbjerg (difficult to interpret, perhaps 'a hill of ? offerings').⁷ The settlement area itself is situated in the open fields of the medieval village, while to the west of the settlement is located Gudme Lake. The Gudme landscape is roughly 100 square kilometres in extent, delimited by the holy hills in the north, west, and south and the sea in the east. It is centred on the central place with its residence and hall.

The settlement is dispersed over a number of habitable areas in between wet areas. The shore of the Great Belt is found 5 kilometres to the east, and here a number of landing places are recorded. Excavations that took place north of Lundeborg resulted in a rich collection of material finds revealing trade and crafts (Thomsen 1994). The Lundeborg site is interpreted as a temporarily visited shore market. Between the Gudme and Lundeborg sites a very large cremation cemetery from the Late Roman Iron Age and Migration period has been excavated.

A large amount of normal settlement material has been found, but more significant in this connection is the large number of artefacts of bronze, silver, and gold. Many objects are of very high quality and some are imported. The earliest finds are from the Pre-Roman Iron Age. The area has been continuously settled until today, but the settled area has moved over time. Excavations have uncovered many farmsteads of normal type. More important is a complex of two unusually large buildings (Sørensen 1994a; Sørensen 1994b), one 47 x 10 metres in size, and the other 25 x 10 metres. The roof-supporting posts were around 80 centimetres in diameter. The small finds are remarkable, rich, and exclusive, with many imports among them. The houses date to the fourth to fifth centuries. They are interpreted as constituents of a princely residence including a residence and a hall, the elements of a *hov*.

⁷ A guess that *Galdbjerg* means 'the hill of magic' (Hedeager 2001: 475) is interesting but dilettantish. The assumption that *Gald-* alludes to Icelandic *galdr* (sorcerers' songs, spells, etc.) is, according to place-name researchers we have consulted, impossible for linguistic reasons, and the interpretation cannot be taken seriously.

The flourishing period of Gudme is shorter than the life span of the Uppåkra hall, only about two centuries, from around 300 AD to the early sixth century. Pollen analyses reveal that afterwards the very open landscape became partly overgrown (Fabech and Ringtved 2009).

Archaeological sites and small finds, as well as place names and topography, illustrate the multifaceted nature of the Gudme central place complex. Attempts have been made to describe it as a reconstruction of the heathen cosmology with Ásgard at its centre (Hedeager 2001; Hedeager 2002; Hedeager 2004). However, since it seems impossible to make a spatial logic out of the mythical rooms and places of the written sources (Brink 2004: 292–98), it suffices here to consider the Gudme complex as an encultured landscape in which ancient monuments and place names manifest the populations' world view and reflect the myths, narratives, and rituals long since forgotten. Certainly, this is a sacral landscape. Gudme could maintain its position as a super-regional centre complex for only a relatively short period. It became a more 'normal' central place and, after the conversion, a church village. On Funen it seems as if its position was transferred to Odense (Oden's *vi*, 'Odin's sanctuary'; see Thrane and others 1982; Hauck 1992a).

Hovs and Idols

The examples above demonstrate that many sacral sites began as holy sites in an open landscape before they became integrated into settlements. When a rural settlement was attached to a ritual site, it often seems to have developed into a central place. The cult now focused on the elite residence and the hall, the *hov*.

Anne Carlie has shown that ritual depositions traditionally were connected primarily to the ordinary longhouse, the main building on the farm (Carlie 2004). In the sixth and seventh centuries AD, the ritual depositions of the building cult changed. The number of traditional remains of butchered animals, ceramic pots, and grindstones decreased, while various religious objects and craft finds increased. Parallel to these changes, cult activities inside buildings became a characteristic of a few large farm complexes, the residences of the elite.

Hov meant originally 'elevation' or 'height', but was later used to name prominent farmsteads, as well as sacral buildings with idols (Vikstrand 2001: 253–72; Brink 2008: 63–64). The classic site is Hófstadir (Hultgård 1996; Fabech 2006; Sundqvist 2008). Here, according to *Eyrbyggja saga*, Torulf built a *hov*, consisting of a large building with a door near one end. Inside there were seat posts standing tall. At the far end of the hall, an annex was found, similar to the chancel of a church, and in the middle of the floor a *socle* was placed,

resembling an altar. On the *socle* lay a penannular ring. On this ring oaths were sworn, and in all assemblies the *gode* (a cult leader) of the *hov* had to wear it on his arm. Behind the altar stood idols. The *gode* himself was responsible for the *blót* (sacrifices) and the maintenance of the *hov* building. This description of a *hov* has until recently been ruled out as fiction, written under the influence of the Christian church (see Olsen 1995). However, twenty years of excavations have revealed evidence from central places and elite residences that demonstrates that the information in the sagas relates to reality. Cult buildings have now been excavated at several sites.⁸

We know very little about the idols standing in the buildings of a *hov*. After the conversion they could not be kept in the place. Conversion stories tell us that, normally, they were deliberately destroyed as part of a conversion ritual (for example, Fletcher 1997: 45–46, 62, 459). However, it is not improbable that some idols were hidden to avoid profanization and destruction, a ritual deposition at a secret place. Instead, figurines in copper or silver alloys have been used to illustrate the idols standing in a *hov* (see the survey in Andersson and others 2004). Such figurines were found at Lunda but can never have served as idols for worship in a *hov* — they are simply too small. The few preserved wooden idols are larger (Van der Sanden and Capelle 2001). However, most of these anthropomorphic figures are very crude and date to the Early and Roman Iron Age. They are found at open-air cult sites, where they were probably worshipped and also served to mark a holy ground.

One idol distinguishes itself (see Figure 12), the well-made, 42-centimetre-tall wooden statuette found in a bog at Rude Eskildstrup, Zealand (Voss 1990; Van der Sanden and Capelle 2001: 43, 53). It has been fastened to a base by a tenon and consequently did not belong originally to the bog. It is naturalistic and depicts a man — perhaps a god — wearing a three-ringed neck collar, an exclusive type of gold collar known in three finds from Sweden that dates the statuette to the fifth century. His dress is ankle-length with crossing bands on the chest. Possibly it represents a body-chain like the one from the Hoxne hoard from Suffolk in England (*terminus post quem* AD 407/08; Bland and Johns 1993; Johns and Bland 1994) and the Szilágysomlyó hoard from Romania (dated to around 400 AD; see Freiburger and Gschwantler 1999). Body-chains are also an extremely rare type of jewellery. They are Roman elite symbols of

⁸ Borg in Östergötland (Nielsen 1997), Lunda in Södermanland (Andersson and others 2004; Andersson and Skyllberg 2008), Järrestad and Uppåkra in Scania (Söderberg 2005; Larsson and Lenntorp 2004), Lisbjerg in Jutland (Jeppesen 2004), Gudme on Funen (Sørensen 1994a; Sørensen 1994b), and Tissø in Zealand (Jørgensen 2008).



Figure 12.
A painted copy of the wooden statuette
from Rude Eskildstrup, Zealand.
Museum Lindgrens lnga, Ravlunda, Scania.
Photo: Charlotte Fabech.
Reproduced with permission.

office, rank, or position. According to depictions, Roman body-chains were mainly used by women. Thus the wooden figure seems to reproduce a man dressed like a woman. This once again returns us to Tacitus's remark about the Nahanarvali — a priest in woman's dress presided in their holy grove (Tacitus, *Germania*, chap. 43) This opens a queer perspective that is relevant in the study of heathen cult (see, for example, Solli 1999), but will not be followed further here. The figure could be called 'the Lord of Rings'. He has a square object in his lap, which might be a cushion. Perhaps a gold ring rested on the cushion, similar to the ring that the *gode* used in the rituals of the *hov* according to *Eyrbyggja saga* (see above). The Rude Eskildstrup statuette is a unique mixture of Nordic and Mediterranean art, and 'With neck thrown back, and eyes wide open and

uplifted, he looks to God on high' (Hannestad 1986: 327 on the portrait of Emperor Constantine the Great on a gold medallion).

The statuette was found alone in a bog. It does not belong to the same category as the simple and early outdoor idols. Possibly this unique Migration-period idol once stood in a *hov*. By accident it is preserved because it was hidden in a bog, a site associated with old beliefs. Perhaps it was hidden there due to upheavals or changes of cult, perhaps as late as at the Conversion. If so, it had been in use for more than four hundred years — a considerable period, but not abnormal for a religious sculpture.

Changing Sacral Landscapes: Europeanization as a Process from Ritualized Traditions to Institutionalized Rituals

Sites with thousands of years' long continuity in ritual practices were deserted in the centuries around the middle of the first millennium AD, which was more or less in the same period as elite residences with halls appeared as part of the central place complexes. Very simply the development could be described as a shift of sacredness from natural places to constructed places. One could also say that it was a change from ritualized traditions including ancestor cults to an institutionalized cult in a formalized system of sacral places (for the concept 'ritualized tradition', see Blomkvist 2002: 26). Magnates and kings got a leading role in new religious practices, and thus their position became legitimized.

In reality the transformation was much more complex. Many natural sites were deserted while, in other instances, one sees how they are transformed into constructed places or integrated into settlements as constituents of central places.

The transformations cannot be properly understood without a European perspective (see Andrén 1998; Näsman 1998a; Herschend 2009). However, since Scandinavia is on the periphery of Europe, it is often overlooked by continental scholars. Furthermore, Nordic scholars often apply restricted perspectives, be they local, regional, or national. Nevertheless, Scandinavian developments were, of course, connected to what happened elsewhere.

Let us begin with the ancient Greeks (Brink 2001: 83–85). Richard Bradley (Bradley 2000: 20–28) compared the archaeological studies by Arthur Evans of sacral places in ancient Greece with the work by Pausanias from the second century AD. The comparison demonstrates that certain types of natural places seem to have been preferred as sacral sites, such as conspicuous cliffs, hill tops, large boulders, lakes and bogs, water courses, springs and wells, caves, trees, and groves. Later on some of the sites were built up with temples and other con-

structions that increased their sacral character. The addition of buildings and constructions indicates a certain institutionalization of the cult.

It is significant that the Scandinavian natural sites mentioned above are not found in wildernesses — many are integrated into the fabric of central settlement areas. It is characteristic that many sites outside of settlements can be seen from the settlement and that the settlement is visible from the site. Thus they are natural elements in the construction or cultivation of the *bygd* (settlement area), or in other words, they are natural constituents in the construction of centre complexes.

Sites like Gudme, Uppåkra, and Helgö are sites of great importance for the understanding of the development of cult in the first millennium AD. All are central places with thick occupation layers and a long continuity as heathen central places. Their cult constructions and houses date as far back as the Late Roman Iron Age, but have an earlier 'natural' beginning. Hills seem to have been natural cult places preceding all three central settlements-cum-cults.

The origin of the Scandinavian hall is complex (Herschend 1993; Herschend 1997; Herschend 1998; Herschend 2009). Of course the halls are built according to domestic building traditions, but it is tempting to ponder the possibility that Roman buildings could be a further inspiration behind them.

Both the archaeological record and written sources indicate that individuals from southern Scandinavia may have travelled far and wide — some even stayed in places far from home. It is likely that some Scandinavians served in the armies during the Roman wars or travelled through Roman and later landscapes for other reasons. They must have visited contemporary villas, military camps, forts, or towns with headquarters, residences, temples, and, later on, churches.

The impact of the Roman Empire can hardly be overestimated. Interaction with Roman civilization pushed and pulled the development in *Barbaricum*, also as far away as in Scandinavia. Significant influences came from the Late Roman culture of the Migration period. Both written sources and small finds reveal that persons from Scandinavia took part in the life on the other side of the Roman border, *limes*. Thus there were direct experiences of the late Roman way of life. During and after the disintegration of the West Roman Empire, the successor kingdoms, such as the Goths, the Gepids, the Franks, and the Anglo-Saxons, took over as 'makers of manners'. Roman culture was transformed and continued in different ways, and Scandinavian archaeological records demonstrate that wide and various contacts were established.

In Scandinavia, the symbolic content of imported Roman artefacts was at first imitated but soon replaced by domestic interpretations of the Roman representations (Näsman 1998b). In this process the world view of Scandinavians

must have changed as well, adapting to the impact of the mixed Mediterranean-Germanic cultures. In the end, Scandinavian societies were reshaped as emulations of the Romano-Barbaric culture of the successor kingdoms. Both in the Late Roman Empire and the successor states, Christianity was the dominant religion. Contacts with the Christian realms of Europe contributed to the transformation of the 'old' North that, from now on, slowly integrated into a developing West European culture.

After years of persecution, Christianity was accepted as religion by Emperor Constantine the Great in AD 313. Already in AD 380 during the rule of Emperor Theodosius I, Christianity had become the state religion of the empire, and paganism was forbidden. The diffusion of Christianity was restricted to the Roman Empire and primarily to the elite of its towns (Fletcher 1997: 15–16). However, after the disintegration of the West Roman Empire, Christianity began to spread slowly from region to region outside the empire's dissolved borders. In old Roman territory, towns often survived as ecclesiastical centres. Outside the former *limes*, Christianity got a foothold in rural centres where the elite resided. Christianity had to adapt to a new rural setting. First Christianity reached the Europeanized rural elite at the central places and, later, in the early towns of the eighth to eleventh centuries, as evinced by *Vita Ansgarii*. Only later were the broader echelons of society reached by the missionaries. The increasing Christian impact accompanied other changes in the heathen societies. The conversion of Scandinavia took place late, after efforts in the eighth to eleventh centuries by missionaries from the period's strong West European polities, the Frankish and the Anglo-Saxon (Sawyer, Sawyer, and Wood 1987: 36–110; Fletcher 1997: 369–416).

The contemporary material culture of Scandinavia was mainly domestic, but strongly influenced from outside. A number of finds and sites demonstrate that much of the foreign impact came from Christian polities.

From Templum to Church and *Hov*

Over the past twenty years, archaeology has painted a completely new picture of the residences of the elite at the central places of the period. We find ceremonial buildings as the place of ritual meals, gift giving, offering feasts (*blót*), weapon plays, negotiations, and so on. In the medieval Icelandic sources, both legal processes and cults are centred at *harg* and *hov*. In *Eyrbyggja saga* an unusually detailed description is made of a *hov*, as well as of the rituals that took place there (see above). These late sources are often reduced to fiction made up by Christian authors.

However, archaeological excavations demonstrate that there was a material reality behind the reminiscence of *høvs* and *hargs*. At sites such as Borg, Lunda, Järrestad, Uppåkra, and Tissø, halls are found.⁹ There is a considerable variation between them, and one finds longhouses including a hall, smaller separate hall buildings, enclosed areas with halls, and ritual constructions. The settlements and their buildings have organically grown out of centuries-old building traditions and settlement patterns, but in comparison with Early Iron-Age buildings, it seems reasonable to look for external influences. The hall at Uppåkra was erected in the Late Roman Iron Age, and the residence and hall at Gudme also date from this period. It is tempting to imagine that knowledge about Roman temples and cult buildings formed part of their background. The archaeological record demonstrates that Scandinavians had the opportunity to see temples, palaces, and basilicas, as well as churches in the Roman Empire and the successor states.

The palace of the emperor was shaped as a sanctuary, *sacrum palatium*. A ceremony with religious overtones developed around the emperor, and pictures of him became more and more iconized (Hannestad 1986: 326). After the Christianization of the Roman Empire in the fourth century, the cult of the emperor nevertheless continued. The Scandinavian gold bracteates manifest some understanding of the Roman cult of the (Christian) emperor (see *bractea* below).

Early Christians did not hesitate to consecrate secular buildings as churches (Milburn 1989: 83). Roman secular basilicas were used (basilica originally meant ‘royal hall’) and in fact, it was the basilica that became the most important medieval church type. Early Christian attitudes towards heathen buildings are indeed interesting. Pope Gregory the Great sent an illuminating letter in 601 AD to the missionaries in Britannia (Fletcher 1997: 254), in which he asked them not to destroy the heathen temples, only the idols. They should sprinkle the shrines with holy water, build altars, and place relics in them. When the population saw that their shrine was not destroyed, they would be more willing to return to the site and worship the true God: Christ. To stop them from sacrificing cattle to ‘devils’, some solemnity had to be offered instead — the missionaries should arrange a holy feast on the day of the martyrs. The population should build huts from branches taken from trees (a holy grove?) surrounding the shrine — now a church. They were allowed to slaughter animals for their own food to the praise of God. Thus Gregory gave good advice

⁹ Borg (Nielsen 1997), Lunda (Andersson and others 2004; Andersson and Skyllberg 2008), Järrestad (Söderberg 2005), Uppåkra (Larsson and Lenntorp 2004), Tissø (Jørgensen 2008).

on how to Christianize landscape and buildings. An important archaeological observation is that one cannot expect it to be easy to detect a 'Gregorian' church among other contemporary buildings.

Furthermore one may conclude that such Christianized shrines must have influenced Anglo-Saxon missionaries working on the continent — similar guidelines were plausibly applied there as well. Part of the heathen cult took place in buildings at the central places. In a number of cases, archaeological excavations have revealed that Christian churches were built on the place of heathen buildings. Good examples are Lisbjerg and Jelling in Jutland, Uppåkra in Scania, Borg in Östergötland, (Old) Uppsala in Uppland, and Mære in Trøndelag.¹⁰ Consequently, perhaps the first Christian service took place in a consecrated heathen shrine.

Bractea

Bracteates are round gold pendants from the Migration period with impressed pictures of an obvious mythical/religious content (see, for example, Hauck 1992b). Roman gold medallions of the fourth century are the obvious prototypes, and some travelled as far as Scandinavia. The pictorial content of the Roman medallions expressed imperial propaganda, and the Scandinavian specimens came probably indirectly as gifts from other barbaric rulers who had adopted elements of the Roman imperial ceremony. In southern Scandinavia, imitations took the shape of bracteates and can be considered to be *imitatio imperii* (for more on this concept, see Vierck 1981).

The Scandinavian goldsmiths soon detached themselves from the Roman prototypes and transformed the bracteates to conveyors of religious and ideological propaganda, clearly an *interpretatio Nordica*. The picture of the emperor was replaced with that of a Scandinavian god or ruler. Other bracteates lack any reference to the Roman prototypes and express Scandinavian myths. They no longer imitated, but are an *emulatio* of the Roman medallion. It is evident that the development of the bracteates presupposes an understanding of the imperial Roman Christian propaganda. The Latin inscriptions were replaced by runic inscriptions, and in an interesting paper, Andrén has argued that this was not only simply a replacement of Latin letters, but also a replacement of

¹⁰ Lisbjerg (Jeppesen 2004), Jelling (Andersen 2009), Uppåkra (Larsson and Lenntorp 2004), Borg (Nielsen 1997), Uppsala (Nordahl 1996; see also Andrén 2005: 113–14); Mære (Lidén 1969; Lidén 1996).



Figure 13.
A book-shaped gold pendant
from Hög Edsten, Bohuslän.
Photo: Nils Lagergren.
Reproduced with permission
of ATA, and the Swedish
National Heritage Board,
Stockholm.

words (Andrén 1991; see also Sundqvist 2007: 209–10). The name of the emperor was replaced with the names of domestic rulers, including AlawiniR, FrawaradaR, Frohila, Hariwulfar, Hapuwulfar, Holtijar, KunimunduR, Niujila, and Swabaharjar. The Latin words *dominus*, *pius*, and *felix* were also replaced — not translated, but replaced with three relevant Scandinavian concepts: *lapu*, *alu*, and *laukar*.

The bracteates demonstrate that some people in southern Scandinavia partly understood and could emulate the Christian Roman imperial ideology. The ‘heathen’ myths of heroes that were created in this period (Wamers 1987) cannot have been uninfluenced by the contemporary Roman-Christian thinking.

Codex

A gold pendant from Hög-Edsten, Bohuslän in Sweden, consists of a book-shaped, square capsule, 11 x 12 millimetres (see Figure 13). It was strung through a tube that forms the rounded back. The front and back of the capsule can be seen as a decorated book cover. The book pages are marked by lines on the narrow sides of the capsule. It is unclear if it once served as a reliquary. The pendant is part of an old find usually dated to the sixth century AD (Fredsjö 1964; Fabech 1992).

If the Hög Edsten pendant was the only book-shaped amulet in Scandinavia, it could — like the Helgö Buddha — be dismissed as a strange find that accidentally ended up in Scandinavia. However, in recent years similar pendants have been found at a number of places in southern Scandinavia. It is, of course, significant that they come from central places like Gudme on Funen, Neble on Zealand, Sorte Muld on Bornholm, and Ravlunda and Uppåkra in Scania (see Fabech and Näsman 2008). They are made in different metals and their shapes vary — some are undoubtedly book-shaped and perhaps reliquaries (Hårdh 2003). They have not been found in graves, so find contexts can only give a broad chronological frame from the fifth to the eighth century. It is surprising to find book-miniatures at so many Scandinavian central places, so how might this be understood?

It is hardly accidental that the earliest books are from this period (Milburn 1989: 291). The holy texts of early Christianity were like the Jewish texts written on scrolls. The bound *codex* with its wooden cover and *paginae* was not invented until the end of the first century. In Ravenna, mosaics show that persons associated with the Old Testament have scrolls, while Christian persons carry hardbacked *codices* (Montanari 2001: 60–61). Thus, the book appears as an important Christian symbol. Furthermore, the book-shaped pendants must have had a symbolic meaning, but the question is how they can be understood.

Many of the book-shaped pendants are decorated in a way indicating that they were produced at one or more of the central places in Scandinavia. That they are so common indicates that contemporary people considered them to be meaningful. The content of the Bible might have been unknown, but the new book-shape was probably considered to be a strong symbol and consequently imitated. Plausibly, book-shaped amulets were associated with the lifestyle of the elite of southern Europe, that is, Christian people to which Scandinavians had connections. Presumably some people at the central places of Migration-period Scandinavia had vague ideas about differences between Christian beliefs and their own *forn siðr* ('old customs', see Brink 2001: 85–86; on the 'Christian' meaning of the pendant, see Gräslund 2001: 20; Lamm 1989: 465).

Cruz

The cross did not become the most important Christian symbol until the fourth century (Staecker 1999: 43–49). A cross is a simple geometric figure and can, of course, be used in decorative art without any symbolic intention. Consequently, it is difficult to conclude whether a cross was intended to be a Christian symbol, a decorative element, or simply a principle of composi-

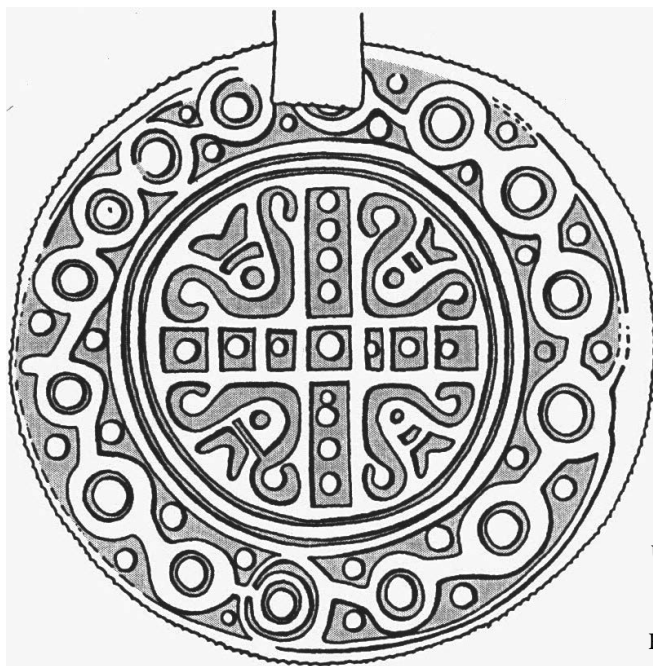


Figure 14.
One of the cross-decorated
gold pendants from Söderby,
Uppland. Drawing H. Lange,
after Lamm, Hydman,
and Axboe 2000: fig. 4.
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tion (a subdivision of a surface into quadrants). Crosses are not uncommon in Scandinavian art from pre-Viking-Age contexts, but no survey of the material exists. We will discuss of potentially significant examples.

Five gold bracteates found in a hoard at Söderby, Uppland in Sweden, carry an interesting cross motif (see Figure 14). The hoard is dated to the first half of the sixth century (Lamm, Hydman, and Axboe 2000), and the cross is equal-armed and decorated with lines and dots. Birgit Arrhenius presumes (Arrhenius 1986) that the motif is the *crux gemmata* (a cross decorated with semi-precious stone inlays). A similar cross decorates the evangelarium of Queen Theodelinda (died 603 AD, see Conti 1999). Simple animal heads are found between the arms of the Söderby cross. ‘Germanic’ animal art is often considered to be heathen, but in contemporary Christian art, ‘Germanic’ animal motifs and Christian symbols are mixed without restraint (see, for example, a pendant from Linon, France, Arrhenius 1986). The cross bracteates are probably produced by the goldsmith who made the other bracteates from Söderby, which carry conspicuously heathen motifs. The goldsmith obviously knew the *crux gemmata* motif. It does not mean that the smith was a Christian, but it reveals close contact with places where Christian motifs were understood.

There are several interesting finds of cross-shaped pendants and brooches from the fifth to seventh centuries (see Lamm 1989: pl. 27; Fabech and Näsman 2008). It is not probable that all women carrying such jewellery associated the cross shape with the Christian faith, but some might have. However, the smiths who made the first objects must have understood that the cross motif was loaded with meaning.

Certainly this material cannot demonstrate that some Scandinavians were Christians, nor that they were well informed about Christian beliefs. Yet, it proves that Christian symbols reached Scandinavia and that they were accepted as strong meaningful symbols. The interpretation that Scandinavian central places emulate the functionality of Roman and post-Roman centres indicates that the Scandinavian world view was influenced as well. Thus the *forð siðr* (old customs), as the pre-Christian belief system was called, must not be considered as 'pure' paganism. If such a thing ever existed, it was before the Roman and Christian influences began to change Scandinavian politics from the fourth century. The Scandinavians were neither Christians nor non-Christians. Ambiguity characterizes Scandinavian culture in the second half of the first millennium AD.

From Pre-Christian Sacral Landscapes to Christian Topography

The conversion is often described as a change from Norse heathendom to Christianity, and thus also as a shift from an Old Norse (*urnordisk*) religion to a New European religion. As evident from the presentation above, we are of the opinion that this perspective is no longer tenable — a Norse heathendom has never existed. The heathendom of the North was not a homogeneous religion. Instead one has to consider various regional cult practices which were changing over time and in space under the impact of shifting influences, both internal and external. This view is also a result of the research project 'Roads to Midgaard — Norse Paganism in a Long-Term Perspective' (Andrén 2005; Andrén, Jennbert, and Raudvere 2006; see also Vikstrand 2002b: 123) with which we fully agree.

For lack of sources, a coherent and unambiguous picture cannot be given of *forð siðr* — that is, Nordic cults and rituals — from the periods before contacts were established with the Graeco-Roman Mediterranean culture. Close contacts with Roman culture were established already before Christianity became part of the late antique culture. Consequently it is difficult to treat the evidence of Scandinavian heathendom from any period of the first millennium AD as an expression of an original Nordic religion. The belief in an *urnordisk* religion is certainly a survival of the pan-Germanic ideology from the nineteenth century (Sävborg 2003; Sävborg 2004).

In the archaeological sources from the Iron Age in the pre-Christian centuries, as well as from the Early Roman Iron Age in the first two centuries AD, natural places are important as sites of cult and ritual. Lakes and bogs are prominent places in this sacral landscape. Obviously wetlands were used as channels to gods and powers of the otherworld. Yet under the increasing influence from Mediterranean culture, natural places began to lose their position. From the third to the fifth centuries, significant cult activity took place at the residences established by a new elite (Fabech 1991). We consider this change to be due to influences of Late Roman culture and an important step in the Europeanization of Scandinavia.

The well-known central places Gudme and Uppåkra are the most prominent examples of how a new settlement type became a centre of a complex sacral landscape. At the new central places one finds elite residences and halls, farmsteads, and workshops. In the surrounding landscape, satellite settlements could offer supplementary functions — both place names and archaeological observations show that such sites could have functions within cults and rituals, crafts and trade, *þing* negotiations, and military support.

Frands Herschend has interpreted the Anglo-Saxon poem *Beowulf* as a description of a struggle between an old society and a new one (Herschend 1992). The beast, Grendel, and his mother lived in a bog and fought against King Hrothgar and his men in the hall, Heorot. Grendel did not look for wealth and honour in the hall, but opposed the new royal power by blocking the use of the hall. The authority of the hall owner — that is, the new royal power and the new social order — was under attack from representatives of old powers. In the sacral landscape at Heorot, the bog represented the past, the hall the future. Thus, according to Herschend, the halls excavated by archaeologists at central places symbolize a new social order. Power was now separated from the community and personified in the chieftain or king in the same way as the hall was detached from the daily toil in the rural houses of farmers.

An interesting story by Gregory of Tours demonstrates how a Christian bishop around the year 500 AD was able to transform and move an old wetland cult to a ritual in a new church (after Fletcher 1997: 49). The peasants of Javols in Massif Central gathered at a lake where they offered textiles, as well as models of cheese, wax, and bread. They arrived in wagons with food, drink, and animals to be sacrificed. The feast lasted three days. The Bishop tried to stop the activities without success but, through inspiration from God, he built a church at the lake and consecrated it to St Hilary (a fourth-century Bishop of Poitiers). Now the peasants left the lake and moved the cult to the church.

It is possible to interpret the setting at Dejberg in Jutland in a similar way (Fabech 1997; Fabech 1999b: 38–39). In the Early Iron Age, the inhabitants of

small settlements deposited wagons, pottery, and other objects in a bog below the 'Hill of Death' (Dejberg). The last finds date to around 400 AD; at about that time, a hall was built at the edge of the hill (Hansen 1996). Rich finds indicate that those in power had succeeded in transferring the cult to their residence, and hundreds of years later, a manor and a church were erected in the same place. Viking-Age finds made in Dejbjerg indicate continuity. Tentatively, it is possible to follow the development from a sacrificial bog in the Early Iron Age to a manor with a hall in the beginning of the Early Middle Ages, and finally to a manor and a church in the High Middle Ages.

The Late Roman culture made its strongest impact in southern Scandinavia during the fifth to the early seventh centuries. For a short period, the late seventh and early eighth centuries, the Europeanization of Scandinavian culture slowed down (Nielsen 1987: 75). This seems to be a period of internal consolidation of the new power structures created during the Migration period (see Wood 1983). This power resided at the central places. A growing number of central places indicates an increasingly complex political and social organization of southern Scandinavian polities.

Central places characterized the sacral landscape of Migration-period southern Scandinavia. In the same way, towns were central in the sacral landscape of early Christianity (Fletcher 1997; Andrén 1998). In this perspective it is noteworthy that the Scandinavian central places have a high proportion of finds with Christian associations. Certainly, central places housed the heathen cult, but at the same time they were gates open to new influences, among them the Late Roman — Christian culture. Consequently, one must not treat central places as representations of pure heathendom, for they demonstrate a continuous hybridization between Mediterranean and Nordic spatial perspectives (on the concept of 'hybridization', see Andrén, Jennbert, and Raudvere 2006: 14).

It is hazardous to assume a connection, but it is nevertheless interesting to note the similarities between the Migration-period churches in Ravenna with separate baptisteries and the southern Scandinavian residences with longhouse and separate enclosed hall (Erritsø, Järrestad, Lisbjerg, and Tissø).¹¹ The similarity cannot be interpreted as a simple Scandinavian imitation, but it indicates that Nordic heathen spatial thinking was not so different from Mediterranean Christian spatial thinking.

The earliest record of a Christian mission to South Scandinavia is Alcuin's story about the missionary Willibrord's unsuccessful attempt to convert the

¹¹ Erritsø (Christensen 2009), Järrestad (Söderberg 2005), Lisbjerg (Jeppesen 2004), Tissø (Jørgensen 2008).

Danish king Ongendus in the early eighth century (Skovgaard-Petersen 1981: 27–28). Unfortunately, Alcuin did not mention the place where Willibrord met Ongendus. It has been suggested that it could be at the then newly established *emporium* at Ribe. But it seems as likely that the encounter took place at the King's residence at a central place in south Jutland, yet unlocated (see the settlement model in Jensen 1991: fig. 12, p. 86).

Based on Willibrord's experience, the missionaries of the Viking Age avoided the central places in the inland, which were dominated by heathen cult. Instead they approached the kingdoms of the Danes and Svear at three *emporia*, Hedeby, Ribe, and Birka, all situated near the sea (Andrén 1998: 152). The *emporia* are a result of a renewed Europeanization during which some of the landing places attached to central places began a process of urbanization, such as Kaupang (Skre 2006a).

A closer look at the material culture of central places reveals that the picture must not be interpreted simplistically. After all, many small finds from central places evince that the resident heathen elite had contacts with Christian areas. We do not assume that they reflect an otherwise unknown mission, nor the presence of Christians, but rather should be interpreted as contacts indicating some familiarity with Christians and Christian culture. We agree with church historian Jørgen I. Jensen when he writes that 'Christianity was perhaps only a conception, but it must have been present in the consciousness of some before it arrived' (Jensen 2004: 12; our translation). The conscious people in question should, in our opinion, be located in the central places. Obviously, the Danish and Swedish kings expected resistance if Christian missionaries had been admitted into central places, but they gave them admission to the gateways of their society, the *emporia*, which were frequented by strangers anyway. In the end, the *emporia* could not adapt to the demands of an increasingly Europeanized society. When the Catholic Church began to establish Scandinavian bishoprics during the Viking Age and the High Middle Ages, a first generation of new towns became the centres of a Christian landscape (Andrén 1998: 153–62).

Central places lost many of their functions during the social transformations at the end of the Viking Age. The heathen cult buildings and ritual sites could be replaced by a parish church after the conversion in the tenth to eleventh centuries. Good examples are Maere in Trøndelag, Lisbjerg in Jutland, Uppåkra in Scania, and Frösön in Jämtland.¹² At other places, both church and manor replaced the heathen centre, for example, at Uppsala in Uppland, Borg in Östergötland, and

¹² Maere (Lidén 1969; Lidén 1996), Lisbjerg (Jeppesen 2004), Uppåkra (Larsson and Lenntorp 2004), and Frösön (Brink 1996b).

Dejbjerg in Jutland.¹³ A consequence of this change is that the Christianized landscape reflects many elements of a late heathen landscape that scholars only recently have begun to understand. Heathen space became Christian (Fletcher 1997: 253–62), and in this process central places represent the institutionalization of heathen society. It took place over centuries and with a strong input from the Christianity of late Roman and successor-state cultures. As a consequence, the late heathen sacral landscape had already changed in comparison to the old landscape of sacral lakes, hills, trees, and similar features. The sacral landscape of the central places was not so different from the early Christian landscape introduced after the conversion. In fact, we dare to suggest that the late heathen landscape constituted the Christian space. However, in the Christian landscape, sacrality was still more restricted in the landscape and was primarily found in buildings and other built structures, although sometimes in the open air (Brink 2001: 81–82, 103). Thus we see three stages in the development of the ritual landscape in Scandinavia, roughly corresponding to the three religions suggested by Stefan Brink (Brink 2001: 105), corresponding respectively to the Bronze Age–Early Iron Age, the Late Iron Age (*c.* 400–1050 AD), and finally Christianity. However, we argue that the second phase began long before the Viking Age, already during the Roman Iron Age. This view is supported by the long continuity demonstrated by the preliminary result of an investigation into place names containing the name of a god or goddess: ‘it seems most probable that all the deities Odin, Thor, Njorðr (Njård), Ullr, Freyr (Frö) and Freyja (Fröja) were current concepts already during the Roman Iron Age (0–400 A.D.)’ (Vikstrand 2002b: 136).

In our opinion, the study of the heathen topography reveals that the Christian topography after the conversion period did not represent a new sacral landscape. Christianity added a new layer to a continuously changing heathen landscape. The heathen landscape of the Early Middle Ages has to be looked upon as a hybrid. The central places-cum-cult places represent a profound change in the heathen landscape. These are Nordic emulations of the Mediterranean prototypes in Late Antique Christianity. Consequently, we suggest that the early medieval heathen landscape was more different from the sacral landscapes of the centuries BC and more similar to the high medieval Christian landscape.¹⁴

¹³ Uppsala (Nordahl 1996; see also Andrén 2005: 113–14), Borg (Nielsen 1997), Dejbjerg (Fabeck 1997: 149; Fabeck 1999b: 38–39).

¹⁴ Two new books were received too late to be integrated in the text above: Carlie 2009 and Herschend 2009.

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SÁMI BURIALS AND SACRED LANDSCAPE: ASPECTS OF THE IMPACT OF MATERIALITY ON SÁMI RELIGIOUS CONCEPTIONS AND PRACTICES

Asgeir Svestad*

Introduction

In the late 1950s, the Swedish ethnographer Ernst Manker investigated a Sámi summer grave at Mörttjärn in the forests of Swedish Lapland.¹ The summer grave in question consisted of a pit in the ground and, according to local tradition, had once contained the corpse of an infant who had later been taken to the churchyard and buried, in the tradition of temporary summer graves. In the vicinity of this grave is a pine tree upon which a memorial carving had been engraved (Manker 1961: 144–45). The carved figures found on the tree appear to have been made by the father, and were engraved with the initials of the infant, year of death (1864), two reindeer, and at the top, two crosses on either side of a ring-shaped symbol (Figure 15). Manker noted the resemblance between these figures and those found on Sámi shaman drums, emphasizing

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¹ 'Summer graves' are temporary graves of reindeer nomads established during summer season. The deceased were later carried to churchyards during the winter and buried there. This custom was probably established in the seventeenth century and was still practised to some extent until after World War II (Manker 1961).

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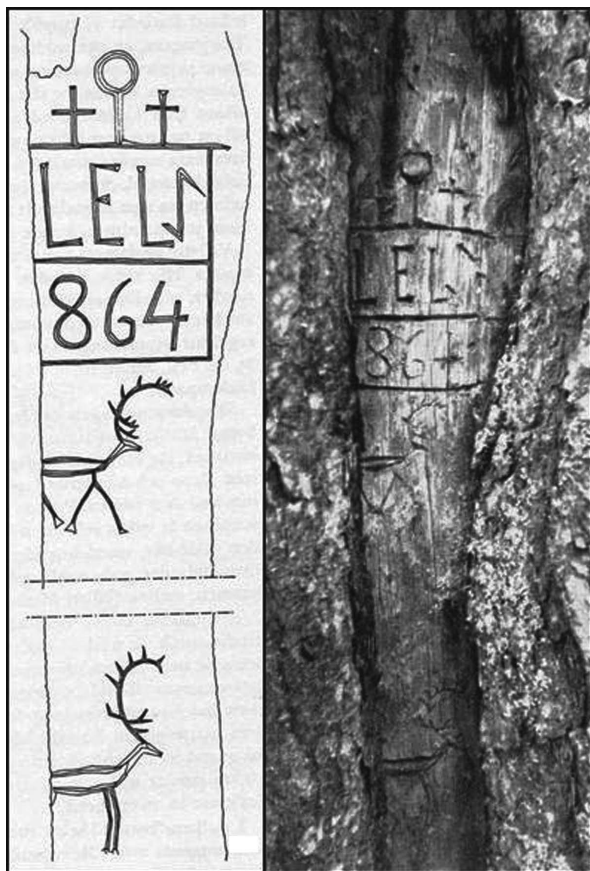


Figure 15.
The carved figures at Mörttjärn,
Lomträsk, municipality of
Arvidsjaur, Norrland, northern
Sweden. Photo and illustration
by Ernst Manker 1961.
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Nordiska Museet, Stockholm.

that the ring-shaped symbol mirrored the symbol of the sun, an element of vital importance in the pre-Christian Sámi universe.²

The grave in question dates to at least one hundred years later than the supposed end of the Sámi religion around 1750 (see, for example, Rydving 1995a). In general, archaeological assessments of surviving Sámi Christian graves suggest that a vibrant pre-Christian religious practice may have continued long after the traditionally dated conversion, although the picture is not clear

² Also central to the Sámi universe are reindeer, which are always depicted on the shaman drums. As well as being one of the shaman's helpers in making journeys to the world beyond, reindeer were sacrificed as part of mortuary practices in both pre-Christian and Christian times (Itkonen 1946; Pettersson 1957; Manker 1961; Mebius 1968; Storå 1971; Schanche 2000; Svestad 2010).

(Svestad 2007; Svestad 2010). Nevertheless, Manker makes a convincing argument in his comparisons of the carved figures found in this grave and those on shaman drums. He also notes another interesting feature — two wooden sticks which had been placed in the tree for the suspension of containers during reindeer milking, a common feature in Sámi reindeer herding (Manker 1961: 144; see also Hedman 2006). These wooden sticks may signify, in a subtle manner, an association between the living and the dead. In the pre-Christian Sámi universe there was no clear division between the living and the dead, and, accordingly, the dead could be useful in the everyday activities of the living, such as those related to reindeer.

The grave at Mörttjärn is a prime example of the complexity of the Sámi conversion to Christianity. Through all its materiality — the emptied grave, the landscape in which it was found, the tree, the carved figures containing both pre-Christian and Christian symbols, and the wooden sticks — pre-Christian religious conceptions and practices still seem to have been kept alive in one way or another (see Kjellström 1987; Äikäs and others 2009).³

This interpretation challenges scholarly opinion as presented within the history of religion, wherein the discussion often becomes too narrow and inadequate when addressing questions of material culture. To quote the historian of religion Håkan Rydving: ‘among the three most important interethnic markers that distinguished Saami from non-Saami, *only language and dress remained when religion no longer functioned*’ (Rydving 1995a: 161, my italics; see also Mebius 1968: 35).⁴ This statement demonstrates a limited view of the material culture of the Sámi. What about objects and materiality belonging to everyday practices, such as the *lavvu* (Sámi tent), *árran* (Sámi fireplace), reindeer sledges, reindeer ownership marks, various knives, Sámi *duodji* (Sámi arts and crafts), not to speak of the sacred mountains, sacred rocks, sacred lakes, sacred forests, and sacred trees — all of which are also parts of the vast materiality, much of which is still in use?

The problem highlighted here, often present in the historical analysis of Sámi religion, represents a general neglect and ignorance of archaeological

³ Maintaining the concept of Sámi pre-Christian religion doesn’t seem adequate for describing the process in question. Terms like ‘Sámi indigenous religion’ or ‘Sámi ethnic religion’ have been applied in other studies (for example, Rydving 1995a; Pentikäinen 1997; Mebius 2007; Äikäs and others 2009). In this context I will simply use ‘Sámi religion’ or ‘pre-Christian’ in quotation marks when referring to Sámi ‘non-Christian’ conceptions and beliefs.

⁴ Rydving’s conclusion is based primarily on an investigation of Christianization among the Lule Sámi (see note 8 below).

remains and materiality.⁵ As will be demonstrated in this article, the impact of materiality on Sámi religion and societies is highlighted through analysis of Sámi burial customs and how they are embedded in the sacred landscape. The sacredness of the Sámi landscape seems to have been a crucial prerequisite, epitomizing the Latourian ontology or concept of *nature-culture*. Bruno Latour argues that, since the time of Descartes, there has been an asymmetrical condition predominant in our so-called modern societies (Latour 1993: 7–15, 91–93, 103–06, 144–45; Latour 1999: 3–10). The material world has been silenced, either as a passive reflex of cognitive processes, leaving everything to culture, or a *Ding an sich*, leaving everything to nature. Latour's aim is to change the 'regime' in a more symmetrical way, recognizing objects and nature as an *active other* of our being in the world.

The investigation of Sámi religion and the effects of the Christian conversion (carried out mainly within the history of religion) has quite unambiguously (and asymmetrically) been conceived only in respect to cognitive processes. The material world or materiality has been judged as a mere sideshow or epiphenomenon to the religious interplay of ideas and conceptions and has not been considered as having any impact of its own on the process in question. As will be argued, this approach is fallacious when analysing the relationship between Sámi burials and sacred landscape in which materiality seems to play an active part. Thus, the impact of materiality adds a new dimension to understanding the (functional) dynamics of Sámi religion.

A number of scholars have emphasized the lack of scholarship addressing variations in Sámi history, ethnicity, culture, and religion (Pentikäinen 1973; Rydving 1995a: 19–23; Hansen and Olsen 2004: 338–39, 355–58; Olsen

⁵ When dealing with different source categories on Sámi religion, Rydving (Rydving 1995a) differentiates between verbal and non-verbal primary and secondary sources. Illustrative of my argument is the fact that very little space is given to non-verbal primary ethnographic and archaeological sources: half a page on Sámi shaman drums, and five lines on sacred places, human graves, and bear graves — only a few parts of relevant archaeological material. However, as has been noted (Rydving 1995a: 31) — in accordance with the late ethnographer Ørnulf Vorren — sacrificial places have been used to a very small extent by historians of religion (see Mebius 2007). The general neglect (or ignorance) of archaeology and archaeological sources in particular is even more present in the following statements: 'Nearly nothing is known of Sámi religion before the encounter with Christianity' (Rydving 1995a: 18), and 'There is almost no knowledge about Saami culture and history among the non-Saami majority of the Nordic countries. In the schools, very little — if anything — is taught. And the same is true for the universities' (Rydving 2004: 100). These statements seem out of this world, literally speaking, when compared to the actual research and teaching on Sámi archaeology, history, culture, and language at the universities of Tromsø, Umeå, Oulo, Oslo, etc. — in some cases for several decades (see also Rydving 2010).

2004; Olsen 2007). As a consequence, scholarly characterizations and presentations have often been too idealized, and generalizations about Sámi culture as a whole have been based on region-specific material. Available archaeological, oral, and written sources provide reasons to be cautious of maintaining the idea of Sámi unity in time and space. This cautious approach has to be taken into consideration when examining Sámi religion, including in this article which, for practical purposes, is a rather general presentation.

The Sámi Religion and the Mythical Landscape

Evidence concerning the Sámi religion and its religious practices has survived from written accounts recorded by missionaries and priests who sought to convert the Sámi during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. The accuracy of these accounts has been criticized for several reasons (see, for example, Mebius 1968: 31–34; Storå 1971: 188, 194; Pentikäinen 1973: 135–36; Bäckman 1975: 37–38, 50–51; Rydving 1995a: 31–34, Rydving 1995b; Hansen and Olsen 2004: 338–39). First and foremost, the validity of these documents is clouded by the subjectivity of the individuals who wrote about the Sámi religion, as these compilers were missionaries and priests who were attempting to convert the Sámi. Secondly, many missionaries copied the ideas and perceptions of their contemporaries, creating (in written form) the idea of a homogeneous religion, which seems not to have been the case. Moreover, they were recorded many years after the Sámi religion ceased to exist in its ‘original’ pre-Christian form. Finally, these sources do not even qualify as primary sources.

There seems to be scholarly agreement that, despite regional variation, Sámi religion has a common structure (Bäckman and Hultkrantz 1985: 9; Rydving 1995a: 22; Hansen and Olsen 2004: 315–18). There are also certain characteristics and similarities between the Sámi and other peoples of the northern areas of the Eurasian continent and between their religious practices and conceptions, such as shamanism, the dead and the world of the dead, sacrifices, the bear cult, hunting rituals, etc. Thus, a comparative approach has been of crucial importance for the comprehension of Sámi religion (for example, Holmberg 1987: 18; Karsten 1952: 76–77, 80; Pettersson 1957: 205–08; Pettersson 1987: 70; Mebius 1968: 80–102; Storå 1971: 186–93; Bäckman 1975: 147–50; Bäckman and Hultkrantz 1978: 62–89; Pentikäinen 1998).⁶ According to current schol-

⁶ The Sámi religion has traditionally been viewed more as mythology than a religion, having been compared with Norse mythology (Fritzner 1877; Reuterskiöld 1912; Wiklund 1916).

arly opinion, Sámi religion could be characterized as a religion of practice and nature worship with shamanistic elements (Hansen and Olsen 2004: 315–16; Mebius 2007: 11–18; see also Bäckman and Hultkrantz 1985: 9; Pentikäinen 1985; Pentikäinen 1997: 324–26; Rydving 1995a: 19–23). Furthermore, Sámi religion lacked a fixed liturgy, ‘scripture’, and priesthood. Instead, its rituals were exercised through actions, myths, narratives, and material utterances. The Sámi shaman — *noaidi* — held an important position as the executor of rituals and mediator between worlds, but did not monopolize rituals and sacrifices. It was a dynamic religion open to individual interpretations, sometimes including the adoption of customs and rituals from other religions, namely Norse mythology, pre-Christian Finno-Ugric religions, and Christianity.⁷ Material surroundings and mythical landscape were also an important part of Sámi religion (Mulk 1995: 17–20; Schanche 1995: 43; Rydving 1995a: 96–103; Pentikäinen 1997: 102–04; Hansen and Olsen 2004: 224–25; see also Mebius 1968; Mebius 2007).

With the exception of some ethnographic and archaeological studies, scant attention has been paid to the physical realm and its significance in Sámi religion (for example, Qvigstad 1926; Itkonen 1946; Manker 1957; Vorren 1985; Vorren 1987; Vorren and Eriksen 1993). The Sámi universe was, according to extant sources, divided into three spheres: the world of divinity, lying above the second sphere which was the terrestrial or earthly world of the living, which in turn lay above the world of the dead. It is questionable whether this cosmology represents a reliable record of Sámi perceptions. This interpretation may have been a projection of the missionaries’ own ‘Christian’ ideology (Hansen and Olsen 2004: 340). Nevertheless, a tripartite universe is presented on some shaman drums, which have generally been viewed as a microcosm of the Sámi universe. This idea of the universe helped form a very specific attitude towards the physical reality, one in which the landscape was made living by a vast number of forces and powers, as well as by the spirits of ancestors. In this way, the surroundings constituted a sacred space where relations to gods, powers, and ancestors were maintained. This idea seems to have created a major problem for the missionaries during the Christianization of the Sámi, even for those who

While Norse mythology obviously influenced Sámi religion, the influence was probably more mutual than one-sided, a view that has been asserted by recent scholarship (Mundal 2000; Price 2002: 233–39; Solli 2002: 169–97; Hansen and Olsen 2004: 62–63; Steinsland 2005: 24–26; see also Kusmenko 2004).

⁷ Crucifixes and other Christian symbols found in pre-Christian Sámi graves are prime examples of this (see Schanche 2000; Hansen and Olsen 2004).

had abandoned their indigenous religion (Rydving 1995a: 142). The religious engagement with this landscape was carried out through both collective and individual religious rituals and practices. Thus, there were individual or family-based sacrificial places, as well as communal sacrificial sites (Rydving 1995a: 96–103; Hansen and Olsen 2004: 316; for overviews, see Qvigstad 1926; Manker 1957; Vorren and Eriksen 1993).

The material remnants of Sámi religion are of crucial importance. The sacred places and sanctuaries, referred to as *sieidi* in Sámi, are scattered throughout the landscape in the form of holy mountains and forests, and stone or wooden idols. In some cases *sieidi* only refers to wooden or stone objects. These sanctuaries are characterized by their distinctiveness in the surrounding environment, either being naturally formed (such as anthropomorphic or zoomorphic stones and rocks, a white quartz rock, a cracked boulder, a distinctive mountain, a large tree) or partially man-made (for example, wooden idols). Furthermore, the sanctuaries and idols not only seem to represent a god, a power, or a spirit, but their factual (material) presence seems to be a statement in itself — a material manifestation of the being of that entity.

Christianization

Extant written sources suggest that there were some attempts to convert the Sámi during the Middle Ages, although there is no clear indication that this effort had any overall significance. Archaeological evidence does, however, indicate that some Sámi in Western Finnmark incorporated aspects of Christian burial customs during the later Middle Ages (Svestad 2006: 13–14). However, it is more correct to view the period of conversion of the Sámi as occurring from *c.* 1550 to *c.* 1750 (Helland 1906: 319; Reuterskiöld 1912: 4; Holmberg 1987: 13–16; Steen 1954: 10–11, 63; Pettersson 1957: 12–17; Mebius 1968: 9–14; Storå 1971: 142, 281; Bäckman 1975: 138; Bäckman and Hultkrantz 1978: 36–39; Widén 1980: 263–64; Pentikäinen 1998: 20–21; Niemi 1994: 309–10; Rydving 1995a: 167; Hansen and Olsen 2004: 318–37). There are, however, chronological differences with regard to the conversion of the Eastern Sámi and Western Sámi.⁸ The Eastern Sámi were converted from around 1550

⁸ The Eastern Sámi in Norway, Finland, and Russia (i.e. the Skolt Sámi, Kemi Sámi, Kola Sámi, among others) are perceived (more or less) as one unit according to common features, as is the case for grouping of the Western Sámi in Norway, Sweden, and Finland (i.e. Northern Sámi, Lule Sámi, Pite Sámi, Ume Sámi, and Southern Sámi). Both terms serve practical purposes in

by Russian-Orthodox missionaries or monks, who had a conciliatory attitude towards the religious customs and practices of the Eastern Sámi, as a result of resemblances with their own symbolic, ritualized, and patriarchal form of Christianity (Storå 1971: 382–83; Olsen 1984: 239–40; Berg 2001: 108–09; Hansen and Olsen 2004: 184; see also Charuzin 1922; Hallström 1922; Itkonen 1946). The Eastern Sámi were able to maintain their religious customs and practices to a large extent, as may be observed, for instance, in churchyards still in use (Sevettijärvi, municipality of Utsjoki, northern Finland). This eastern conversion was a strong contrast to the aggressive conversion of the Western Sámi, which took place between 1650 and 1750. The Lutheran missionaries and priests who led these conversions partly suppressed the Sámi ‘pre-Christian’ rituals and religious practices. Among several tactics, Lutheran missionaries tried to dupe or threaten the Sámi into revealing information about their sacrificial places and hidden shaman drums in order to confiscate or destroy them. However, the western conversion had its nuances — on some occasions Sámi even destroyed *sieidi* sites themselves, while some priests were also tolerant towards Sámi religion, especially in the eighteenth century (Mebius 1968: 36, see also Rydving 1995a; Hansen and Olsen 2004).

Pre-Christian Sámi Burials

Pre-Christian Sámi burials have been thoroughly investigated only in parts of northern Fennoscandia (Manker 1961; Schanche 2000). They are primarily associated with the so-called *talus* or *scree graves* (*urgraver*), which date from 900 BC to AD 1700/1800 (Schanche 2000), the origins of which are associated with the emergence of Sámi ethnicity in the first millennium BC (Schanche 2000: 315–17; Hansen and Olsen 2004: 116–22; see also Olsen 1984). The earliest of these graves, most dated prior to 800 BC, are located in the Varanger area of Finnmark in northern Norway (Schanche 2000: 188–89). As indicated by their name, they appear in talus or scree deposits as constructed chambers covered with stone slabs, but also as stone piles or cairns, or in cavities and beneath boulders without any constructed grave. There is, however, a significant variation in respect to placement on or in the ground and other construc-

this context, but disguise significant differences within the two groups. The somewhat blurred border between them stretches from the municipality of Syd-Varanger in eastern Finnmark and southwards to the area between the outlets of the Torne and Kemijoki River in the Bay of Bothnia (see Tegengren 1952; Storå 1971; Niemi 1994).

tion details, some of which is mentioned in the written sources. Some archaeological parallels to the documentary descriptions have been recorded on the Kola Peninsula and in northern Finland (Leppäaho 1937; Gurina 1956; Gurina 1997; Kopisto 1971; Ruohonen 2002; Ruohonen 2005; Shumkin, Kolpakov, and Murashkin 2006), indicating a larger distribution area of pre-Christian Sámi graves as well as a greater variation in form, particularly in areas bordering other cultures in the south and east (Zachrisson 1997; Bergstøl 1997; Bergstøl 2008a; Bergstøl 2008b; Taavitsainen 2003). Additional variation or even hybrids can be seen in areas bordering the Norse or 'Germanized' settlements along the coast of northern Norway (Simonsen 1959; Sjøvold 1962–74; Binns 1988; Bruun 2007; Svestad 2007). Given this geographical distribution and form variation, the fixed category and the very name of the 'talus grave' may be seen as a constraint on our understanding of the pre-Christian Sámi burials (Svestad 2007).

One significant feature of many pre-Christian Sámi graves and cemeteries is the presence of sacrificial places and sanctuaries at the site or in its proximity. One famous and well-known example is the cemetery at Mortensnes or *Ceavccegeađge* (The Greasy Stone) in Varanger Fjord, where graves, a sacrificial enclosure, and the sacred bear stone are present virtually on the same spot (Figure 16). Proximity to water (by a river or on an island) was particularly important for the placing of a cemetery in Eastern Sámi areas (Storå 1971: 197; Luk'jančenko 1985: 202–03). This characteristic is probably related to the belief that a burning river named *Tolljohk* separated the living from the dead.⁹ Similar characteristics are shared with pre-Christian Karelians and other peoples. Water was a manifestation of the border between the world of the living and the world of the dead.

There is a striking coherence between different kinds of pre-Christian Sámi graves and the quality of landscape or surrounding environment. Graves literally seem to reflect 'the nature at hand', which may have had a formative influence on rituals, practices, and religious beliefs (both regionally and locally),

⁹ According to Storå the Eastern Sámi believed that, in order to reach 'the heavenly paradise', the dead person had to cross *Tolljohk* on a narrow bridge from which many fell into the river (Storå 1971). They could be saved by Pedar and his wide meshed net, but that depended on making the sign of the cross correctly. Those who succeeded could enter the kingdom of the dead on the other side of the river, while those who did not succeed fell through the net and remained in the river forever. Storå notes that 'the mention of a heavenly paradise seems to suggest that the Skolt [Eastern Sámi] ideas of a realm of the dead situated on the other side of a river have been mixed up with Christian concepts' (Storå 1971: 197).

as it did for the location and construction of burials and sacred places.¹⁰ Sámi place names, as well as the evidence from extant written sources, support this argument. One example is the meanings of the *Sáiva*- or *Saivo*-concept and its phonetic and semantic variants. In Northern Sámi areas *Saivo* may refer to a sacred lake with no inlet or outlet and a double floor, and occasionally to the dwelling place of the goddess *Saivo Nieida*.¹¹ In Southern Sámi areas *Sáiva* (or *Sájva*) may refer to a sacrificial place, or a 'department' (or 'segment') of the world of the dead linked to particular mountains where the deceased or little people dwell (Wiklund 1916: 60–70; Manker 1961: 21–30; Bäckman 1975: 13–17). A similar variation of meaning is also found in the written sources, although not to the same extent since their authors (missionaries and priests) often copied each other (Bäckman 1975: 56–65). However, this variation or multitude of meanings may be conceived as influenced by a formative dynamic corresponding to that of the pre-Christian Sámi graves. Another related example is the presence of different designations of the realm of the dead in the written sources, such as *Jábmiáibmu*, *Mubbenáibmu*, *Rotuáibmu*, *Fudnosáibmu*, *Kjapsáibmo*, *Sarakkaáibmu*, and *Sáivaáibmu* (Pettersson 1957: 131; Storå 1971: 195).¹² These differences may represent various 'departments' of the realm of the dead, and may have been partly influenced by concepts from neighbouring religions such as Norse mythology (Pettersson 1987: 78; Bäckman 1975: 135–37; Storå 1971: 194–98; Hansen and Olsen 2004: 121–22). It is possible, however, that the variation implies a mode of material flexibility significant to Sámi religion and religious practice. That is, 'nature at hand' might introduce subtle differences in the religious conceptions and expressions, altering them in a natural manner according to the distinctive qualities of the surrounding environment. The differences in meaning attached to concepts such as *Sáiva* or the categorization of the realm of the dead are likely to have been influenced by such processes.

It is obvious that a range of formative processes had a crucial impact on the structuring, interpretation/reinterpretation, and modification of the divisions of the surrounding environment (sacred vs non-sacred), as well as for the actions of the gods, powers, and spirits reigning there. This feature is crucial to understanding the religious concepts and practices of the Sámi, and the way

¹⁰ The expression 'nature at hand' signifies that landscape or nature and humans bring each other into being, as mutually constitutive as nature-culture.

¹¹ *Saivo Nieida* is referred to as 'Vandkvinden' (Water Woman) in the extant written sources (see Bäckman 1975: 14).

¹² Designations are given in a partly antiquated orthography in the Northern Sámi dialect.



Figure 16. A sacrificial enclosure (to the right) and the famous sacred Bear Stone (the outcrop, upper left) at the pre-Christian Sámi cemetery at Mortensnes/Ceavccegeadge, Varanger, Finnmark, northern Norway. Photo: Asgeir Svestad, 2006. Reproduced with permission.

that they came into being and were constantly reinterpreted or modified. As has been noted by Louise Bäckman:

Studying the written sources often gives the impression that religious conceptions, or at least statements referring to them, are coloured by the person's own fantasy and requirement, whereon a statement from a *noaide* [shaman] may go astray if applied to the people in general. (Bäckman 1975: 54, my translation)

Although Bäckman arrives at a different conclusion, her argument nevertheless supports the general arguments offered here. As noted above, missionary contemporaries wrote of a homogeneous religion, which later research has shown to have been the converse. It is clear that within the Sámi religion, actions, myths, narratives, and material utterances constituted its religious practice. Moreover, individual preferences and perhaps what could be described as 'mythical fantasies' were significant for its exercise, especially by shamans. This diversity is a key feature that helps to demonstrate a correlation with the abundant whims of 'nature at hand', which here is considered as a material necessity in the formation and maintenance of Sámi religion.

Another important feature of pre-Christian Sámi burials is their construction. Stone or talus graves were built to afford dry conditions for the deceased and were designed with apertures and gaps, while inhumation burials were shallow (Gurina 1956: 294; Gurina 1997: 152, see also Šmidt 1930; Manker 1961: 178–80; Storå 1971: 92; Schanche 2000: 123; Shumkin, Kolpakov, and Murashkin 2006: 4; see also Shumkin and Murashkin 2003; Svestad 2007: 45–47). Some inhumation graves were dug more than one metre deep into the ground (Manker 1961: 147; Shumkin, Kolpakov, and Murashkin 2006: 4; Svestad 2007: 47), but such graves were relatively shallow compared to the depth of Christian burials (typically two metres). These features can be understood in connection with the Sámi conception of a dual ‘soul’ (or spirit), a *free* or *shadow* ‘soul’ and a *corporeal* ‘soul’. The concept of a free ‘soul’ and a corporeal ‘soul’ has many interpretations, and it is possible that academic arguments have, to date, been too normative and categorical (Storå 1971: 188, see also Itkonen 1946; Bäckman 1975; Pettersson 1957: 41–46).¹³ In a similar way as the *Sáiva*-concept, Sámi conceptions of the deceased may very well have been flexible and even inconsistent, which is to be expected of a non-dogmatic and practice-oriented religion. The situation of the interplay between the living and the dead being a significant problem for the missionaries during conversion, as pointed out by Rydving (Rydving 1995a: 142), may support this argument. Scholars agree that, after death, the free ‘soul’ gradually released itself from the body for a new existence in the world of the dead, *Jábmiaibmu*. The corporeal ‘soul’ remained in the grave attached to the physical remains, and perhaps to the skeleton in particular. From there, the ‘soul’ could make trips as an apparition or ghost, frightening individuals who encountered it, even causing a person’s

¹³ The concept of a soul, which is applied in written sources and scholarly analysis, seems misleading, since it is so closely related to the Christian conception of a soul and life after death, as it was for those missionaries who recorded the Sámi religion. As noted by Itkonen, the concept of a soul was unknown for the Eastern Sámi and was only introduced among the Western Sámi during conversion (Itkonen 1946: 161–62). Consequently, Itkonen applies the German concept *Geist* (or spirit) when dealing with the Sámi conception of the departed. This concept seems more adequate for several reasons, especially since it is supported by the term for the world of the dead, *Jábmiaibmu*, that is, the suffix ‘*áibmu*’, which signifies ‘air’ (or ‘spirit’) in several Sámi dialects (see, for instance, Friis 1887; Nielsen 1932; Hasselbrink 1981; Svonni 1990; Kåven and others 1995; Korhonen 2007; Sammallahti and Nickel 2006). *Jábmiaibmu* should then signify ‘the air of the dead’, but it is important to add, as noted by Pettersson in his comparative study, that a departed’s spirit (or ‘air’) could be represented by, or more precisely materialized in, a shadow, a name, an object, an animal, a picture, etc. (Pettersson 1957: 55; see also Storå 1971: 187–88).

death. On the other hand, the 'soul' of the dead could also be useful in everyday life, for instance in reindeer herding (Rydving 1995a: 141). This usefulness was dependent upon enacting the correct sacrifices and mortuary rituals, such as sacrifice of a reindeer and the correct handling of its bones (Pettersson 1957: 51, 107–09, 117–19; Storå 1971: 189–93; Schanche 2000: 260–64; see also Mebius 1968). These constraints thus had a significant impact on the construction of graves: the apertures and gaps in the stone graves permitted the 'souls' to move in and out — moving between the worlds of the living and the dead — and the shallow inhumation graves also permitted easy exit. The same constraints also influenced the placement of cemeteries on islands or islets. The Eastern Sámi cemetery *Jámessuolo*, the Ghost Islet, in Bugøyfjord in Eastern Finnmark, is an illustrative example. The islet's very name and the physical isolation of the dead correspond to the importance of trying to avoid conflicts with the ghosts. This circumstance is of particular relevance given the Eastern Sámi belief that the 'souls' of the dead were afraid of water (Storå 1971: 129).

The shrouding (or winding) of the corpse in birch bark and/or its placement in a pulka (reindeer sledge) is another significant feature of pre-Christian burials. While shrouding is present in the earliest graves, it is not clear when pulkas began to be used as containers for human bodies. However, pulka containers seem to have been used at graves on the proto-Sámi cemetery of Bolshoy Oleny ostrov (Great Reindeer Island) on the Kola Peninsula — these are dated as early as the second millennium BC (Shumkin, Kolpakov, and Murashkin 2006).

Shrouding customs changed through time. During the Middle Ages the shrouding in birch bark was at times replaced with ordinary dress, and in the same period it seems that birch bark sometimes was employed mainly as a cover or layer above or beneath the pulka, a hollowed tree trunk, or a wooden coffin. Burials in coffins and dresses have been interpreted as resulting from Christian influences (Schanche 2000: 336), and this may well be the case.¹⁴ A small cemetery near the confluence of the Kista and Varzuga rivers on the Kola Peninsula contains some of the earliest coffins in Sámi contexts, tentatively dated to the twelfth–thirteenth centuries (Ovsiannikov 1993: 11).

The grave finds consist of various animal bones, shells, potsherds of asbestos tempered ceramic, artefacts of bone and stone, brooches and jewellery (especially of Karelian or eastern origin), weapons for hunting, knives, and occasionally crucifixes and other Christian symbols (Schanche 2000: 192–226, 336).

¹⁴ Inhumation burials may also be an influence from Norse or 'Germanized' settlements during Iron Age and/or later Christian 'Scandinavians' (see Pettersson 1957).

The finds date to different eras, and there are a number of differences regarding the age and sex of the individuals found. Though the graves themselves come in a number of different forms, they contain a coherent and roughly unified material repertoire. This repertoire does not necessarily mean that Sámi society was homogeneous in prehistoric and early historic times, as seems to be the traditional view (for further discussion, see Hansen and Olsen 2004: 36–42, 125; Olsen 2004; Olsen 2007; see also Pentikäinen 1973; Rydving 1995a), but there nonetheless appear to be some consistent material structures within this heterogeneity.¹⁵ These similarities in material structures include the placing of burials or cemeteries on islands; morphological features and the organization of the surface of the grave; construction of burial chambers; the use of pulka, coffins, hollowed tree trunks, or no container; the shrouding of the body in birch bark; and other features. It is important, however, to underline the fact that graves of different morphology may appear in the same area, and even in the same cemetery.¹⁶

Christian Sámi Graves

Pre-Christian graves and sanctuaries are documented within or in the vicinity of many Christian cemeteries, and they seem to have been a crucial prerequisite for how the Christian cemeteries came to be placed in a mythical sphere (Svestad 2007; Svestad 2010). In 1661 a church was built among the Sámi at the marketplace of Markkina in northern Finland (the church was moved in 1828). In the cemetery enclosing the church is an old sacrificial tree, where the Sámi used to deposit coins, jewellery, and other objects in an aperture by the

¹⁵ This can be related to Ludwig Wittgenstein's discussion of the notion of 'family resemblance'. Wittgenstein uses 'games' as a paradigmatic example. When looking at, but not thinking about, all the different game types (board games, ball games, children's games, etc.) and what they have in common, Wittgenstein found it difficult to end up with a common definition. But instead 'we see a complicated network of similarities overlapping and criss-crossing: sometimes overall similarities, sometimes similarities of detail [...]. I can think of no better expression to characterize these similarities than "family resemblance"; for the various resemblances between members of a family: build, features, color of eyes, gait, temperament, etc. etc.' (Wittgenstein 1989: 31–32). Hence, there is no single feature common to all the games. In a similar way, the concept of family resemblance may be applied to characterize the graves in question and their different criss-crossing features.

¹⁶ Illustrative examples are the cemeteries at Mortensnes (i.e. Per Larsenvik locality) and Paddeby in the municipalities of Unnjarga/Nesseby and Vadsø (both eastern Finnmark). However, their chronology has not been sufficiently investigated.



Figure 17.
Two wooden idols,
Hietasaari churchyard,
Lake Inari, northern Finland.
Photo: Asgeir Svestad, 2005.
Reproduced with permission.

base of the tree, a practice still performed after the turn of the twentieth century (Manker 1961: 74, 220; see also Halinen 2007; Mannela 2007). On the middle of the tree a wooden cross arm was attached to form a cross in Christian times, but both the cemetery and the sanctuary are supposedly older than the church. Another illustrative example is the churchyard at Hietasaari (Sandy Island) in Lake Inari, also in northern Finland. This churchyard was established in 1793 and was closed as late as 1905. In a survey in 2005 the author documented the very well-preserved but hitherto unknown remains of two wooden *sieidis* next to Christian graves from the turn of the twentieth century (Figure 17). The circumstances indicate that the idols were in use at the same time as the cemetery, and possibly to its very end, while possible pre-Christian graves were also documented on the outskirts of the cemetery. Both above-mentioned examples strongly indicate the ‘continuation’ of Sámi religious conceptions and practices long after the conversion had been completed. The material features are not identical before and after conversion, but there is a material resemblance within the same landscape.

Christian graves appear in cairns, cavities, and beneath boulders, in much the same manner as pre-Christian graves. The majority of Christian graves, however, appear as inhumations in regular and exclusive Sámi churchyards, such as the grave found at Markkina. In both cases, the dead are placed in pulkas, hollowed tree trunks, and coffins, but the latter group seem to dominate in post-1750 graves in Western Sámi areas. In some instances, it is difficult to distinguish between pre-Christian and Christian Sámi burials, particularly in Eastern Sámi contexts, as noted by Storå (Storå 1971: 86; see also Charuzin 1922; Hallström 1922; Itkonen 1946; Simonsen 1959). At the churchyard of Vilasund in Västerbotten in the interior of northern Sweden (in the Western Sámi area) which is dated to 1723–61, there are examples of inhumation burials in pulka in which the bodies were shrouded in wool fabric and a small knife placed beside the corpse (Meschke 1977: 80).¹⁷ In the mountains approximately twenty kilometres further east, at *Tjatjetievva*, an almost identical pre-Christian inhumation grave is documented and dated to around 1650 (Manker 1961: 144–49).

Comparisons between cemeteries within Western Sámi areas indicate that, despite variation in grave forms, the archaeological evidence suggests that the conversion to Christianity did not impact Sámi graves or burial customs to any great extent. As has been shown, there seems not to have been any consistent break or discontinuity respecting burial customs as they existed before conversion (Svestad 2007; Svestad 2010; see also Pettersson 1912; Manker 1961: 178–98, Schanche 2000: 340–43). Hence, it is possible to view the different features of Christian graves as a continuation of a general development beginning in early medieval times, a development characterized by the incorporation of Christian symbols and an incipient use of inhumation graves and wooden coffins. Furthermore, the use of birch bark gradually changes from shrouding to just a cover or layer above or beneath the coffin or pulka. The latter occurred at the same time as shrouding or ‘wrapping’ started to appear in cloth, fabric, and dresses. This practice signifies a situation where new features were incorporated as a result of interaction between the Sámi and their Christian and non-Christian neighbours, but not as any straightforward adoption of the ‘foreign’ culture in question. It is important, however, to emphasize that Christian Sámi graves, just as pre-Christian Sámi graves, demonstrate a significant degree of heterogeneity. Some graves, for instance, show evidence of coffins and shrouding of the body in birch bark, others of pulkas and shrouding replaced by a

¹⁷ The chronological accuracy of Vilasund churchyard is somewhat uncertain (Steen 1954; Meschke 1977).

dress, yet others of coffins and shrouding in fabric (Svestad 2007; Svestad 2010; see also Leijonhufvud and Hallström 1909; Cajmatz 1950; Cajmatz 1951; Backman and Lindgren 2004; Backman and Lindgren 2005). The variations are many, and they multiply if one includes the objects appearing in Christian graves, which will be briefly touched upon in this context.

Grave finds are not documented in all the investigated graves.¹⁸ One striking feature, however, is that different objects of metal seem to be the most frequent artefacts whenever documented, such as knives, strike-a-lights, jewellery, bracelets, coins, buttons, crucifixes, and other items of silver, copper, iron, or alloys. The sacred character of metal was a commonly held belief among the pre-Christian Sámi, ensuring protection of the dead entering his or her next life (see, for example, Mebius 1972: 107–09; Bäckman and Kjellström 1979: 181; Storå 1971: 183; Schanche 2000: 268–69). Without going into further detail, the appearance of metal objects in Christian graves seems to be significant, conceived as a ‘continuation’ of Sámi ‘pre-Christian’ belief.

An important feature of Christian cemeteries is the overall shallowness of inhumations, although this practice seems to have changed some time after 1800 (see Svestad 2010: 83). Shallow inhumations, which also existed in pre-Christian times, probably served the same purpose as gaps and apertures in pre-Christian talus or scree graves — to avoid conflicts with ‘souls’ of the dead by not hindering movement in or out of the graves. Recent excavations at Sámi churchyards in Finnmark have revealed traits that might indicate that this custom also existed among the Christianized Sámi until the second half of the eighteenth century (Svestad 2006; Svestad 2007; Svestad 2010). One of these churchyards, Gullholmen in the municipality of Tana, was established and consecrated in the 1720s/30s; it was abandoned in 1868 (Svestad 2010: 78–80). The excavations have only documented burials in coffins, and several peculiar and subtle features have been noted. For example, most coffins have small drilled holes at the short end of each coffin, the purpose of which may have been practical — perhaps to transport and/or lower the coffin into the ground in the churchyard.¹⁹ However, most of the holes found at both sides are asymmetrical and in an awkward position, suggesting that the holes were

¹⁸ As noted by Schanche in her investigation of pre-Christian Sámi graves, the lack of grave finds in many instances must be seen as a consequence of excavations being carried out by ‘unprofessionals’, such as physicians and other non-archaeologists (Schanche 2000: 110–15). This situation is also the case when dealing with Christian Sámi graves.

¹⁹ Similar findings have been documented at a Sámi churchyard in another region of Finnmark (see Svestad 2006).



Figure 18. Apertures for the 'soul'? Drilled holes in the short ends of coffins documented at Gullholmen churchyard, municipality of Tana, Finnmark, northern Norway. Probably dating from the first half of the nineteenth century. Photo: Asgeir Svestad, 2006. Reproduced with permission.

not designed to carry or lower a coffin, but may have served a spiritual purpose. Given Sámi preoccupations with the 'souls' of the dead, these holes may have been drilled to (also) allow the exit of the 'soul(s)' (Figure 18). There is a parallel feature in the burial custom of the Eastern Sámi, Karelians, and other people further east, of making a small window or aperture in one of the pediments of grave houses. This aperture is generally conceived in the same manner as suggested above as an exit or passage for the 'soul' (Storå 1971: 153–55; see also Laakso 2003). This custom was still practised in the orthodox churchyard of Sevettijärvi in Northern Finland in the late 1950s (Figure 19).²⁰

²⁰ It may be argued that this is an orthodox custom, but as stated above, it is well known that the Orthodox Church was tolerant towards indigenous or ethnic religions and customs,



Figure 19. Aperture for the 'soul' in a burial house of an Eastern Sámi grave, Sevetijärvi churchyard, northern Finland. Late 1950s. Photo: Asgeir Svestad, 2005. Reproduced with permission.

Materiality: Construction and Inertia

Latour argues (Latour 1993: 75–76, 104; see chap. 3.3–4.9 for an elaborate discussion) that dualisms such as culture–nature or subject–object do not exist outside of theories. There is no such thing as a pure nature or a pure culture inside of us, but our way of perceiving nature is always cultural, and culture is always charged with nature in the way that humans are embodied and therefore are things themselves. The discrepancy between culture and nature in our contemporary society is an asymmetrical condition introduced by modern metaphysics. The consequence is that we have been oblivious to the work done by things (or materiality), at best merely judging their quality as representatives of thoughts and ideas, 'victimized' by cognitive processes. According to Latour, *nature-culture* is a more adequate concept of reality, signifying a symmetrical relationship and including the non-cognitive actions of things. A characteristic feature of humans is that we constantly mix together actions and tradi-

whether they were of Sámi, Karelian, or other origin. Hence, the apertures might well be some kind of transmitted feature (see Storå 1971).

tions, things of different times, past and present. Thus, our human enterprise is poly-temporal in the way that we have always sorted and mingled things of different origin, nature with culture, and humans with things. Pure objects do not exist according to Latour, since it presupposes a static reality. Latour therefore applies the term quasi-objects, implying that things are mixed together according to different and contradictory histories and actions. The reality is therefore constantly being produced through a collective process, where things, the quasi-objects or the non-humans (as Latour also designates them) enter as inevitable actors. We are not able to live without these quasi-objects, and thus our world consists of networks in which both humans and non-humans work as actors. Latour advocates what he calls a symmetrical anthropology, implying symmetry between body and soul, subject and object, human and thing, culture and nature, as well as in a certain way past and present. Latour's theory is a useful way of understanding pre-Christian and Christian Sámi burials and their relationship to landscape and its sacredness.

Paul Connerton's study (Connerton 1989) indicates a more particular theoretical relevance, concerning the collective memory of society expressed through religious practices and rituals. In order to understand these collective actions Connerton (Connerton 1989: 72–74) applies the concept of *incorporating practice*, which is closely related to the philosopher Henri Bergson's concept of *habit memory* (Bergson 1991). Bergson differentiates between representational memory and habit memory.²¹ The former is a cognitive form of memory used to recollect impressions and events, while the latter is a non-cognitive form of memory acquired by repetition, as a habit: 'like every habitual bodily exercise, it is stored up in a mechanism which is set in motion as a whole by an initial impulse, in a closed system of automatic movements which succeed each other in the same order and, together, take the same length of time' (Bergson 1991: 80). As explained by John Mullarkey, 'representational-memory "*imagines*" the past whilst habit-memory merely "*repeats it*"' (Mullarkey 1999: 51). Put briefly, Connerton's main point is that in a collective ritual the past is remembered through 're-enactment', or the physical repetition of actions. This is an incorporating practice implying that conceptions of belief are embedded in materiality in such a way that they continue to exist in a tacit manner. Connerton stresses that this form of practice is particularly significant in mortuary rituals of archaic societies: 'The rhetoric of re-enactment is encoded too in an even more direct embodiment, in *gestural* repetition. Particularly

²¹ Bergson's conclusion, however, is neither of the two, but a third more general concept of memory (Mullarkey 1999: 51–52).

in archaic rituals this process comes most starkly into play in the represented presence of the dead' (Connerton 1989: 68). It is questionable whether this practice is only relevant to so-called archaic societies. According to the nature-culture ontology advocated above, there is no reason to differentiate between archaic and modern societies regarding the role of materiality. However, this role may differ through time and between societies. In any case, keeping in mind the re-enactment of rituals and practices concerning the exercise and preservation of Sámi religion, the material features of Christian Sámi cemeteries may be understood as a result of incorporating practices. Incorporating practice (and habit memory) is first and foremost attached to action and exercise, not mind and reflection, and therefore is particularly appropriate when trying to understand a practical, ritualized, and flexible religion as seems to be the case of Sámi religion. This does not serve as a sole explanation, excluding the impact of conscious or cognitive acts, but illuminates how the reproduction of materiality is not always intended or consciously caused. Materiality or the surrounding environment may function as a social and bodily agent in its own right, as something that gathers and relates qualities in time and space (see Olsen 2003: 98). Hence, materiality is inseparable from mortuary practices, the dead, and life after death. The tacit appearance of various pre-Christian Sámi features attached to Christian graves may at least be partly understood as a result of incorporating practices subsequent to Christianization. In this way materiality was able to preserve the important connection between the living and the dead, which seems to be present long after Christianization. The surrounding environment or mythical sphere (including pre-Christian graves and sacred places) must be conceived as a crucial prerequisite in this regard, as an overall manifestation of the eternal realm of the living and the dead. The materiality as seen through the graves themselves and the surrounding environment may therefore have had a constitutive impact on the Sámi conversion to Christianity, suspending the opposition between confession to Christianity on the one hand, and the relation to Sámi religion, burial customs, and sacred landscape on the other.

A subtle, long-lasting, and illustrative indication of the pre-Christian link is provided by the continuous existence of metal objects in both pre-Christian and Christian Sámi graves. This occurrence must also be seen in the context of the significant and interactive role played by metal objects during the rise of Sámi ethnicity in the first millennium BC (Olsen 1984; Olsen 1991). These objects may be a momentous example of the constructing inertia of materiality, and may lie behind the numerous conceptions of the sacred character of metal among the Sámi up to recent times (see, for example, Turi 1911; Pettersson

1957; Manker 1961; Mebius 1968; Mebius 2007; see also Zachrisson 1987; Zachrisson 2009). This is not, however, an argument in favour of Sámi ethnicity as an unchangeable essence, but an attempt to conceive the impact of materiality and its different accentuations through time.

Concluding Remarks

As has been noted by Rydving:

As the departed did not have a similar position in Christian (Lutheran) theology as in indigenous thought, the departed lost significance when the Christian religion became increasingly predominant. The change of religion implied that one half of the family ceased to exist. (Rydving 1995a: 143)

Although it appears that Christianity undermined the importance of the dead among the Sámi, archaeological evidence, as has been shown, does suggest that this 'other half' continued to remain a part of Sámi nature-culture in a subtle way (see Svestad 2007), thus making religion and religious practice something of an event — of doing or acting when the mind becomes insufficient.

In reflecting upon our own contemporary Christian inhumations in the western world, the following is striking: we place our dead in coffins, which we lower deep into the ground; we put flowers on top, cover them with earth, and finally mark the graves with tombstones.²² We choose this method without much reflection or thought. However, we are still certain that this is the way it should be done. In other words, in burying our deceased we seem preoccupied with acting — doing things properly — rather than with thinking. This signifies how burials and mourning practices are embedded in materiality and bodily movements, and how habit memory plays a crucial part.

The heterogeneity of both pre-Christian and Christian Sámi graves stresses that Sámi burial customs were not strongly normatively constrained during any period. On the contrary, these customs seem to have been very inconsistent, varying throughout the Sámi regions. This interpretation challenges the idea of an authentic and consistent Sámi religion. Allowing for the 'uncontrollable' impact of a 'working' materiality, the very idea of an authentic and consistent religion turns out to be insufficient. Let me illustrate this point with one last empirical example of a recent study on Sámi nature theology (Johnsen 2005).

²² In the Lutheran tradition.

In interviews with reindeer Sámi, most of them true Christian believers, the theologian Tore Johnsen (himself a Sámi) has documented several practices and rituals that clearly relate to 'pre-Christian' cosmology, whether the informants are aware of these links or not. One of these practices is connected to the *sieidis* (sanctuaries, sacrificial places) that are still known in the landscape where they carry out their reindeer husbandry, as they have been doing for many centuries. It is no longer a custom to sacrifice to a *sieidi*, partly reckoned as idolatry, but it is necessary to treat the *sieidi* with care and not behave disrespectfully or provocatively. One of the informants made the following statement: 'For a long time now this has been our belief. You shall not worship that [*sieidi*]. But treat all things decently. The animals, knucklebones, those who are dead. One must be cautious towards the lot' (quoted in Johnsen 2005: 32, my translation). Amongst other things this statement indicates a material link between the 'pre-Christian' and 'Christian' religious practices and beliefs of the Sámi. The Christian Sámi no longer sacrifice, but the *sieidis* and other things are still present and alive within the nature-culture. This example indicates that conversion did not imply a desacralization of space, as argued by Rydving (Rydving 1995a: 144), but rather how 'extinct' religious conceptions and practices are actually stored in space, making sacralization a dynamic but inconsistent process. Consequently, statements characterizing Sami religion as dead, abandoned, or non-functional (see, for example, Mebius 1968: 14; Bäckman 1975: 138; Rydving 1995a: 142, 161) are rendered insufficient or even inadequate for understanding religious processes among the Sami during and after conversion.

It seems difficult to understand Sámi religion and conversion fully by recourse only to written sources and cognitive processes. Materiality plays a crucial part, whether articulated or not, and emphasizes how 'nature at hand', things, constructions, and bodily movements are significant for our understanding of religious practices and processes. Few traces of the materiality dealt with in this context are to be found in the written records. Neither should it be expected, as the materiality represents 'actors' and actions of a silent kind. Of all rituals in a society, burial customs and mourning practices are perhaps the most defining. Where burials occur, people's dependence on and affection for things seems to be of utmost significance.

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THE ANCIENT AND SACRED GREEK LANDSCAPE

Gullög Nordquist

‘by the Earth and Sky, heroes and heroines,
springs and rivers, and all the gods and goddesses’
(Dittenberger 1915–24: 527, ll. 15–16;
Chaniotis 1996, 195–201, no. 7)

The Ancient Greek landscape was thought to be alive and its features were given genders (Cole 2004: 3–6). The mythical landscape was a reality that to a great extent occupied the same physical space as the actual landscape that humans moved in, but it also had a non-physical, purely mythical dimension that was not accessible to men. In this landscape the pastoral god Pan met the running messenger from Athens on his way to Sparta during the Persian invasion, at the border with Arcadia, the pastoral landscape par excellence (Pausanias, *Description of Greece*, XXVIII. 1). At the same time it was a ritual landscape where people could visit the sanctuary with a spring (now a nunnery), close by today’s Nauplion in the Argolid, where the goddess Hera regained her virginity every year (Pausanias, *Description of Greece*, II. 33. 2). Here, one could see the trace of Poseidon’s trident on the Acropolis of Athens and visit some of the places where Zeus was said to be born. In this landscape female nymphs lived in trees, mountains, and springs, and the rivers that wound around the plains like snakes were both male river gods and snakes. Traces of the activity of heroes could be found in many places.

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Landscape Studies in Greece

Landscape studies, and surveys in particular, became popular in the Mediterranean world during the latter half of the last century. Although extensive landscape surveys with the expressed purpose of finding both known and unknown sites, studying battlegrounds, etc. had been undertaken from the nineteenth century onwards, these were planned and conducted more systematically for the purpose of not only identifying archaeological sites, but also exploring and studying the landscape in which they were situated. In the 1960s, the University of Minnesota Messenia Expedition (UMME) was among the first to use interdisciplinary approaches. A series of systematic and intensive surveys, based on various methods and focusing on various regions, was carried out on the island of Melos (Renfrew and Wagstaff 1982), in Boeotia (Bintliff 1985), in the southern Argolid by the American Exploration Project (Jameson, Runnels, and van Andel 1994), and in the Berbati Valley in the Argolid (Wells and Runnels 1996), to mention some examples. This regional focus has been strengthened during recent times (Bakke 2008: 8; Horden and Purcell 2000).

The interest in the landscape has often centred on the ecological, economical, and functional aspects of the archaeological landscape, and has included methods such as space analyses, studies of land use, the prevalence of forests and plants and animals and of soil degradation and erosion, and so on. The theoretical backgrounds to the work have varied from geographical and environmental determinism to visual and personalized meanings and kinship structures (Forbes 2007: 9–49). The two works of Tuan (Tuan 1974; Tuan 1977) place the Greek landscape in a more global perspective, discussing human attitudes to and the perception of the landscape in a broader sense. In the volume *An Island Polity*, which treats the finds of Phylakopi on Melos, Renfrew does discuss the problems of identifying cult and the religious context of finds, but this discussion concerns the finds of certain loci in the settlement, not the landscape (Renfrew and Wagstaff 1982).

Later works have taken a more holistic approach, for example the Methana survey (Mee and Forbes 1997; Forbes 2007). Forbes sees his method as an ethnographical approach, and he titled his 2007 book on the Methana Peninsula *Meaning and Identity in a Greek Landscape*. He treats the landscape from a series of perspectives: the productive, historical, and kinship landscape, and also includes the religious landscape. The study demonstrates the complexity of the landscape and its manifold meanings for the people living in it (Forbes 2007: 397). Another — but in some respects similar — road is taken by Bakke (Bakke 2008: 10–11), who argues for a study of the landscape in connection

with visual culture. He bases this on the view of cultural memory as a landscape of images, citing Schama's *Landscape and Memory* from 1995. Bakke links this approach to the Graeco-Roman rhetorical tradition in which images and places (*imagines* and *loci*) function as technical devices for aiding the rhetor in his memorization of spoken arguments. According to Bakke (Bakke 2008: 10–11), the Aristotelian theory of *reminiscentia* (Aristotle, *On the Soul*, 432a 17) implies a cultural theory that comes close to 'memory culture' (Oexle 1995) or cultural historical tradition. Much debated by Shanks (Shanks 1996) and other scholars are different political attempts to redefine the history of, for example, modern national states or political groups. One example are the discussions by Hamilakis (Hamilakis 2007) and Brown and Hamilakis (Brown and Hamilakis 2003) on the role of archaeology and the conception of the past in modern Greek society. Also within historiographical studies, the interpretations of the past, its historical and cognitive landscape and its places and focal points, have been discussed. For example, Cole recently has suggested that ancient Greek communities inhabited three landscapes: the natural, the human, and the imagined (Cole 2004: 7).

One aspect of the memory culture approach relevant for this study is the exploration of cultural memory as expressed in sanctuaries and ancient heritage/ancestral places and sites. De Polignac (de Polignac 1984) suggested that the early sanctuaries outside the urban centres were the driving forces of the *polis* development. His ideas gave rise to a long and lively debate that still continues today, and a number of studies have been published on the subject by scholars such as Alcock (Alcock 1993; Alcock 2002).¹ In fact, the memory culture not only concerns the placing and contextualization of sanctuaries and their place in the ancient cultural memory, but affects the landscape as a whole. Any discussion of an ancient Greek landscape of memories, history, and religion must include the narratives, stories, myths, and tales concerning the past that were placed in a living landscape.

The landscape of religion and mythology is found inside the human brain in the form of memories, and it is structured according to ideas about the worlds of gods and men. The rocks, rivers, or trees may be a physical reality, but the way they are seen and interpreted by humans, and the implications of such interpretations in the space of men, is decided by underlying cultural, social, and psychological principles and ideas in the heads of people (Forbes 2007: 392–94).

¹ For further discussion, see also Alcock and Osborne 1996; Van Dyke and Alcock 2003. For a commentary on Pausanias, see Alcock, Cherry, and Elsner 2001.

The Mythological Geography

Ancient Greek mythological geography tended to centre on human societies and settlements. The *polis*, the city-state, essentially referred to its male citizens, the *polites*, and their families. These *poleis* (pl.) had a limited number of citizens and small populations. In the Aristotelian ideal, the number of citizens was limited to five thousand. This small size, which meant that people knew each other, or at least knew *of* each other, gave coherence to these poleis and shaped their identities (Tuan 1977: 175–76). In the central place of the city-state, the town itself, the gods of the polis were worshipped in their roles as protectors of ordered civilized social life and as controllers of the forces that could threaten civilization. The gods of war, Ares and Athena, also belonged to such a sphere, as did the gods of creation, fertility, and augmentation, such as Demeter and Dionysus. After all, warfare was endemic between the Greek city-states, and military prowess was part of the ideology of the polis, as was fertility (in the form of citizen children, grain, vines, and olives — the so-called Mediterranean triad of agricultural and cultivated products). The cultivated land surrounding the town was protected by gods and goddesses whom people turned to for good harvests, fruitful soil, and rainfall, gods such as Demeter and Dionysus or Pan and the nymphs in the wooded mountain slopes and the pastoral landscapes, where they were honoured in grottoes and caves.

Further out, among the wild animals, were more nymphs and divinities of nature as well as the goddess Artemis as *potnia theron*, the mistress of animals. It was a dangerous area where men risked crossing over into taboo places, as demonstrated by the story of Actaeon, who was devoured by his own dogs because he disastrously came upon Artemis bathing together with her nymphs (Apollodorus, *The Library*, III. 14. 1–2; Ovid, *Metamorphoses*, III. 138). However, the Greek gods took many shapes and variants, as marked by their epithets. Artemis, as the protectress of girls and women in childbirth, could be found in groves in the countryside, such as Brauron in Attica. She was also venerated in the old cult of Artemis Orthia in Sparta (Cole 2004: 180–88). In other words, various aspects of the gods suited different localities. On the mountain tops Zeus the Thunderer had his sanctuaries, while other aspects of his godhead, such as Zeus Horkeios, the oath protector, or Zeus Olympius who ruled Olympia, could be found closer to humans.

In the ancient Greek perception of the world, as in many other societies, distant and strange lands further away from the civilized Greek urbanity existed.² To

² Tuan outlines two principle kinds of mythical space: one, the area of defective knowledge around what is known which frames the pragmatic world; the other, a spatial component of a

Herodotus, father of history from the fifth century BCE, India was at the world's most distant eastern limit; it was a region where all living creatures, whether four-footed or flying, were much bigger than those of other lands (horses excluded). He writes of groups of people living there who were cannibals, while others killed no living creature, had no houses, and did not plant anything, gathering grass and natural grain instead; if anyone became sick, he went into the desert and no one knew whether he remained sick or died (Herodotus, *Histories*, III. 99. 1–CVIII. 1). It should be noted, however, that some of his tall stories have been shown to have a factual basis: his gold-digging ants exist in the form of gold-digging marmots in present-day Kashmir (Peissel 1984).

Those far-away areas were thus where strange foreigners and their gods existed, areas where the 'Others' did the opposite of 'Us', where Egyptian men urinated sitting and women standing (Herodotus, *Histories*, II. 35. 2).³ In such regions beyond the civilized world of the Greeks, Amazon women ruled over men: the mighty and macho hero Heracles had to dress and spin like a woman, while the Amazon queen took his lion skin and club. Even further out, one would arrive at far-away areas. To the north, beyond the mountains, lay Hyperborea, a land of eternal spring that was never touched by the cold north winds of the wind god Boreas.⁴ This was the place where Apollo went on winter holiday, cavorting with the Hyperborean maidens in the northernmost regions. Far away the great freshwater stream, the Oceanus, encircled the world. Towards the east or south, people told of lands where pygmies fought with cranes on the southern shores of Oceanus (Homer, *Iliad*, III. 3), a place sometimes identified with India or Ethiopia. Some reports show some knowledge of the foreign lands and their inhabitants, but it is intermixed with stories of monstrous and mythical beings. In his *Catalogue of Women* Hesiod mentions 'dark Libys and high-souled Aithiopes', together with *katoudaioi* (those living underground) and 'feeble Pygmaioi', but sees them all as the offspring of Zeus (Hesiod, *Catalogue of Women*, frag. 40A).

The landscape in which people moved (see Map 4) was also a historical and narrative landscape which, over the millennia, had aggregated stories, meaning,

world view, a conception of localized values that sets the frame for the practical activities of the people (Tuan 1977: 86).

³ The reversal of gender roles in Egypt is also alluded to in Sophocles, *Oedipus at Colonus*, 337–41: 'For there the men sit weaving in the house, but the wives go forth to win the daily bread.' On ethnocentrism, see Tuan 1974: 30–44.

⁴ See the discussion in Valtonen 2008, esp. pp. 44–52.



Map 4. Map of Greece. Map courtesy of Gullög Nordquist. Reproduced with permission.

and sentiments.⁵ As Habicht puts it, a Greek district is 'a region with a past, in myth as well as history' (Habicht 1985: 20). Heroes of the past left traces of their activities in the form of memories connected to sites and spaces. Such memories could take physical forms; hero graves marked battlegrounds, as in the case of Plataea and Marathon, and were placed in the landscape as foci for cult activity or necromancy.

Within the Greek regions, some landscapes were more uncivilized and dangerous than others. Arcadia, encircled by mountains in the high plateau on the

⁵ See the discussion by Tuan 1977: 13.



Figure 20. The ash-altar of Zeus, Lykaion, Arcadia, Greece.
Photo: Gullög Nordquist. Reproduced with permission.

Peloponnese, was considered to be wild and harsh, with gruelling cold winters and hot summers. The place was populated by rude but honourable peasants and pastoralists, and for a long time it was without a real, constructed city. The myths surrounding the cult of Zeus Lykaion at an ash altar on the top of Mount Lykaion reflect this wild character (Figure 20). By the ash altar was a *temenos*, a sanctuary, and it was said that no shadows fell within it and that anyone who entered it died within the year (Pausanias, *Description of Greece*, VIII. 38. 6). Myths connect the cult with wolves (*lykos*) and werewolves. The second-century CE writer Pausanias (Pausanias, *Description of Greece*, VIII. 2. 1) writes of King Lycaon of Arcadia and his fifty sons sacrificing a child and pouring out its blood upon the altar of Zeus, and immediately afterwards changing from a man into a wolf.

This horrible tale of the sacrificed child and the werewolves resulting from the rituals was in antiquity already taken to indicate that human sacrifices occurred at the site. In the cult as described by Plato (Plato, *The Republic*, 565D–E), one clan would gather every nine years to make a sacrifice to Zeus Lycaeus and a small piece of human entrails would be ‘minced up with those of other victims.’⁶ The person who ate the human flesh turned into a wolf and

⁶ The text thus implies human sacrifices. Plato sees such actions as the ‘starting-point of the transformation of a protector into a tyrant’ (Plato, *The Republic*, 565D).

could only be returned to human form if he did not eat any human flesh during the next nine-year cycle. However, if he tasted human flesh during this time he remained a beast forever. Pausanias himself believed this story because it was old and, in his words, had the additional merit of probability. 'For the men of those days, because of their righteousness and piety, were guests of the gods, eating at the same board; the good were openly honored by the gods, and sinners were openly visited with their wrath' (Pausanias, *Description of Greece*, VIII. 2. 4–6).⁷

It is true that Arcadia, due to its elevation, still regularly sees deep snow in the winter, and the now-typical Mediterranean citrus trees cannot grow there. The climate was seen as key to the formation of human personality traits: harsh living conditions shaped equally harsh characters. This was the reason, according to the second-century BCE author Polybius (Polybius, *Histories*, IV. 20. 5–21. 11), why the ancient Arcadians formulated laws of obligatory music training, necessary to bring civilization and peace to the societies and their inhabitants. As the cityscapes grew and the settled town life became a 'normal' way of living during the centuries before Christ and in the Roman Empire, this former harsh reality of rural existence was idolized as a pastoral Eden, with innocent love between nymphs and shepherds, rural enjoyment, song, and dance.⁸

The landscape was inhabited by usually invisible and supernatural beings, spirits or 'ghosts' of the past as well as gods. They could meet with and show themselves to humans, but to come upon them uninvited was dangerous, *vidi* Artemis and Actaeon. The dead heroes could be called upon through proper rites (Ogden 2001) and could take the visual shape of spirits or ghosts, such as when Odysseus called forth the dead from the underworld and met his fallen comrades (Homer, *Odyssey*, XI. 62–78). The spirits of the dead had a visual materiality, although they lacked the physical materiality of a body (Garland 1989). Yet many ghosts are and already were perhaps by the later part of antiquity 'no more than rhetorical shadows that appear from the ready of historical texts' (Bakke 2008: 13).

The Described Landscape

In contrast to all the information that we have concerning mythological settings in the ancient texts, it is more difficult to find many 'pure' descriptions of the landscape or nature, or expressions that demonstrate reactions to the natu-

⁷ The ancient texts are generally cited from the Loeb editions.

⁸ Tuan discusses this preference for the countryside over the city (Tuan 1974: 106–17).



Figure 21. Coin from Syracuse representing the head of the nymph Arethusa, surrounded by dolphins, which used to be human sailors. Uppsala, Coin Cabinet, Uppsala University (ID-no. 400 062). 485–79 BCE. Photo: Harald Nilsson. Reproduced with permission.

ral landscape in the ancient texts. The traveller Pausanias famously concentrates on towns and sanctuaries (Habicht 1985: 23).⁹ He does include brief notes on the landscape, telling us which mountain range lies between two towns, or by which river or on which plain or mountain a certain sanctuary is located. He can call a river mighty or a mountain high, but when he notes vegetation, for example, it is usually connected with sanctuaries and/or myths and legends. So, for example, going from Tegea over the mountains to Argos on the Peloponnese, he notes that along the straight road there are many oaks to be seen, but he does so in order to situate a temple to Demeter in Corythenses in this oak grove (Pausanias, *Description of Greece*, VIII. 54. 5).

When Pausanias describes the landscape or natural phenomena — how a river runs or mountains divide the land — there is usually a strong overlay of mythology; in most cases when something remarkable is found in the landscape, a mythological explanation is required. The water in the river Anigrus that ran from Arcadia to the coast of Elis stank horribly, even at its sources, and it could not support piscine life at all. Its tributary Acidus, however, had edible fish, but only until the rivers united, after which the fish caught were inedible. This was explained as the result of the centaurs washing their wounds in the river after being hit by Heracles' arrows that were dipped in the poisonous blood of the Hydra (Strabo, *Geography*, VIII. 3. 20; Pausanias, *Description*

⁹ For more on Pausanias, see for example the important work by Habicht 1985; Alcock, Cherry, and Elsner 2001; Hutton 2005.

of Greece, v. 5. 5). The river Alphaeus also merits a long description (Pausanias, *Description of Greece*, VIII. 54. 1–3) as it passes through the ‘large and stormy’ Adriatic Sea, and then appears again in Ortygia near Syracuse on Sicily and unites with the spring Arethusa (Figure 21). The mythological background concerns a hunter, Alpheus, who fell in love with the huntress Arethusa, but she fled to Ortygia from him. There she turned from a woman into a spring, while Alpheus was changed by his love into the river, persistently seeking her. Since Pausanias knows about an ancient oracle answer, ascribed to the eighth century BCE, where Apollo confirmed the story that the water of Alpheus did indeed mingle with Arethusa, he is convinced of the truth of the legend.

The more scientific geographer Strabo (63/64 BCE–c. 24 CE) is hesitant to accept the legend, but he also retells a story of how a cup thrown into the Alpheus turned up in the Arethusa spring in Syracuse (Strabo, *Geography*, VI. 2. 4). Alpheus and Ortygia are very typical examples of the engendered landscape: the male river eagerly pursues the fleeing female spring in order to unite with her. And, as pointed out by Cole (Cole 2004: 28–29), this also reflects the need of the Greek colonists in Sicily to claim a relationship to the Greek homeland through interconnecting waterways, often rivers carrying the same waters of old to the new settlement. There are some cases, however, where strange natural occurrences do not result in a mythological narrative, even with Pausanias. He remarks, for example, on a case of a naturally hot, salt-water bath (Pausanias, *Description of Greece*, II. 34. 1). When the aforementioned river Anigrus reached the coast according to Pausanias, its currents were often held back by violent gales that carried the sand from the sea, causing a sand bank to be built up. Whenever the sand was wet on both sides — with the water from the sea on one side and by the river on the other — the sand was turned into quicksand, ‘so that beasts and still more travellers on foot were in danger of sinking into it’ (Pausanias, *Description of Greece*, v. 5. 7–10). Pausanias does not say if he is speaking from his own experience.

The human perspective of Pausanias, and indeed of the ancient periods as a whole, differs greatly from our modern ways of thinking about space. Ordering space through itineraries rather than through our more abstract mathematical geographical systems meant that everything was seen from the point of view of the traveller. Pausanias talks of distances and spaces in relation to what the human body can see: if the traveller looks to the right or left, and a little bit further from where he stands, he will find something worthy of notice. The measurements stadia, foot, dactyls, etc. are all related to the body. In other words, ‘the folds of the world [...] are thus related as analogous to the folds of the human body’ (Bakke 2008: 95).

Metamorphosed Landscapes

Natural aspects of the landscape were not always what they seemed at first, since much of the visible nature was thought to have had a previous human existence. Various flowers and other plants, and even stones, were ascribed supernatural origins as humans who had been turned into non-humans as gifts or as punishments by the gods. Behind many of these metamorphoses lay strong, often negative feelings: fright and sorrow, and hopeless love. Too much human pride could also cause these transformations: the beautiful Narcissus faded into the narcissus flower enamoured by his hopeless love for his own reflection in a spring, and the nymph Echo with the lovely voice, who spurned the advances of Pan but lost her heart to Narcissus, faded away, only able to repeat the voice of another on the mountain slopes (Ovid, *Metamorphoses*, III. 365–401). In addition, a rock formation on Mt Sipylus was seen as Niobe, who was turned into a weeping stone when her children were killed because of her own pride (Pausanias, *Description of Greece*, I. 21. 3; Boardman 2002: 106).

A fairly general rule seems to have been that a nymph was not to reject a god. As a female, and thus of lower status than the male gods, she was supposed to surrender. If not, she could be punished by being turned into the symbol of the god. Syrinx ran from Pan and was transformed into a clump of reeds; out of these Pan made his pan pipes (which are also called *syrinx* after the nymph) (Ovid, *Metamorphoses*, I. 689). The Oread, or Dryad, Pitys also tried to escape him and was turned into a mountain fir, the sacred tree of Pan. Apollo's lovers also tended to become trees or flowers: the nymph Daphne appealed to Zeus after fleeing from him and was then turned into a laurel tree out of pity and Apollo took the laurel tree as his own symbol. Acantha, another female who refused the god, scratched his face and was turned into an acanthus plant.

The victims of metamorphoses were not only nymphs, but also humans: young men could be transformed, sometimes as a way of transcending death. Hyacinthus was hit by a discus and died; she was then turned into a hyacinth flower by Apollo, the petals of which were marked with the letters *ai ai* (alas). According to the people of Salamis, a similar flower, white and tinged with red and similarly marked, appeared when the hero Ajax died (Pausanias, *Description of Greece*, I. 35. 4). The young Cyparissus, another of Apollo's lovers, who killed his tame deer by mistake, was turned into the tree of grief, the cypress. The sea-nymph Argyra fell in love with Selemnus, a handsome young shepherd, but when she later deserted him, he pined and died of love and was turned into a river by Aphrodite, the goddess of love. Yet Selemnus, even in the form of water, continued to love her, so Aphrodite bestowed on him a further

gift by blotting out all memory of Argyra. The water of Selemnus was said to be a useful remedy for love-sick men and women; if they washed in the river they forgot their passion. Pausanias comments that if 'there is any truth in the story the water of the Selemnus is of more value to mankind than great wealth' (Pausanias, *Description of Greece*, VII. 23. 1–3).

Humans who were turned into birds often have a place in the mythological realm as the end result of frightful stories of betrayal and murder. It is rarely the happily chirping bird or beautiful birdsong that is stressed in these legends; instead it is the human words that may be heard in the birds' songs. The nightingale's song seems to have been regarded as especially mournful, since whichever myth one chooses it is the song of a parent mourning a child whom he or she has killed, whether this be Aedon, Procne, or Philomela (Ovid, *Metamorphoses*, VI). The swallow or sparrow (Philomela) belongs to the same story, as does the hoopoe, who was once Tereus, king of Thrace. The hoopoe asks *pou pou* (Where? Where?), in search of his dead son Itys who was killed by his own mother and aunt in a family tragedy (March 1998: 21, 373–74). The trumpeting sound of the swan, the *kyknos*, was also interpreted as a lament: the bird was thought to have once been a man named Cynus, a friend of Phaeton who fell to his death from a chariot in the sky into the river Eridanos. Cynus tried to retrieve Phaeton's body without success and roamed the shores lamenting his dead friend, until finally, out of pity, the gods turned him into a swan. Phaeton's sisters, the Heliades (children of the sun) were turned into poplar trees standing by the river's shores, and their tears were turned into amber (Ovid, *Metamorphoses*, II. 301).

Did people believe in the stories? Certainly some did. Even those philosophers who are sceptical do not offer an outright rejection of myth, but prefer instead to conceive of them as more rational, allegorical, or historical explanations (Dowden 1992: 39–49). The geographer Strabo was no friend of myth-making and writes:

One must put aside many of the mythical or false accounts such as those of Phaethon and of the Heliades changed into black poplars near the Eridanos (a river that does not exist anywhere on earth, although it is said to be near the Po), and of the Islands of Amber that lie off the Po, and of the guinea fowl on them, because none of these exist in this area. (Strabo, *Geography*, v. 1. 9)

The so-called rational philosophers, such as Hekataios (fifth century BCE), advanced alternative, but to our mind equally fanciful myths, such as how the vine was born from a sow as a rooted vine stock (Dowden 1992: 42–45).

Others took the myths more seriously. Pausanias, who tells a lot of these tales, sometimes tries to put his guides right by referring to what he considers the true story. When talking of Lydia in Asia Minor he mentions a small city called 'The Doors of Temenus' (Pausanias, *Description of Greece*, I. 35. 7–8) where a man's seat was carved into a rocky spur close by. Here his guides told him that the enormous, seemingly human bones were found after a crest broke away in a storm and they were identified as belonging to the giant shape-shifter Geryon; the seat was also said to be his. At this point Pausanias pointed out to them that 'Geryon is at Gadeira (i.e. Cadiz, Spain), where there is, not his tomb, but a tree showing different shapes, the guides of the Lydians related the true story, that the corpse is that of Hyllus, a son of Earth, from whom the river is named'. In this instance Pausanias seemed to think that the true story was something that should be kept from visitors, if they could not, as he could, force it from the guides through their own deep knowledge. One can, however, imagine equally well that the local guides had several stories in their repertoire that could be suited to any visitor.

The border between human and non-human was therefore not closed, but the border to the non-physical landscape could, in certain cases, be overcome and turn out to be a mythical reality. It also meant that the physical reality — the landscape of mountains, trees, flowers, birds, water, and stones that people lived in, and where they worked and walked — had numerous openings into this mythical reality, openings that people knew about and believed in. The stories connected with local heroes and places were passed onto the next generation as part of the shaping of the cultural identity of the group or groups of people who lived in and moved about the landscape.

Nature Deities

The worship of nature deities played an important role in the everyday life of many ancient Greek farmers and pastoralists who depended on the landscape and its resources. In both the ancient texts and in modern treatises they are largely overshadowed by the more colourful godly personalities that we meet in drama, poetry, and art.

Rivers were male and river gods were plentiful and some of them were famous, such as Achelous in Epirus that flows into the Ionian Sea on the border between Acarnania and Aetolia in north-western Greece. In the *Iliad* (Homer, *Iliad*, XXI. 194) this river god is called the Prince of Rivers, and is most famous for his wrestling match with Heracles over the Deianeira (March 1998: 11–12).

The river is a shape-shifter that can appear as a roaring bull, but also a shimmering, coiling snake. He can also take on an anthropomorphic shape, with a man's body, a bull's head, and water flowing from springs in his shaggy beard (Sophocles, *The Women of Trachis*, 10–17). The water deities were fixed in their physical landscape, in contrast to the Olympian gods, for example, but in the *Iliad* (Homer, *Iliad*, xx. 4–9) when Zeus summons all the gods, it includes all the nymphs and river gods — only the encompassing Sea, Oceanus, remains behind. They clearly belong to the divine sphere.

Other famous rivers known from myth were more difficult to place in the physical reality by the ancient writers. The river Eridanus is described by Hesiod (Hesiod, *Theogony*, 338) as a son of the titaness Thetys, but it was also known as a river in northern Europe, rich in amber. However, as Herodotus (Herodotus, *Histories*, III. 115) points out, the word *Eridanus* is Greek and therefore suggests that the river that was supposed to run around the world was probably a Greek invention. He associated it with the river Po, because it was near the end of the amber trails. The holy isle Electris (*elektron* = amber) reached by the Argonauts, lay off the mouth of the Eridanus, in Apollonius of Rhodes's epic poem *Argonautica* (Apollonius of Rhodes, *Argonautica*, IV). Other suggestions ranged variously from the Nile to the Danube.

The nymphs are immortal minor divinities, but were still invited to attend the gods' assemblies on Mount Olympus. They were inseparable from the landscape and closely related to its topographical features. They occupied the landscape in all its diversity and therefore have many names. Water in particular was associated with nymphs. In brooks and springs they are called *naiads*; they appeared in the sea as *nereids* and *okeanids*; we find them in springs as *pegaiiai* and in fountains as *krinadai*. The mountains were regular meeting places for divinities and humans, and in the wooded slopes norms were reversed during the Dionysiac festivities. Mountains were economically important for grazing, apiculture, and stone-cutting, and the nymphs could be found in this landscape in the mountains (*oreads* after *oros*, mountain), groves, trees and flowers, clouds and winds, and many other types of nature. The *alseids* were found in the groves and the *dryads* in trees. The *hamadryads* were so closely connected with their tree that they died when the tree died. The *meliads*, the nymphs of the ash tree, belonged to the old generation of gods and were thought to have been created out of a drop of blood from Ouranos's severed genitals. In actuality, any pleasant spot had its divine presence. Caves were also associated with the nymphs (Larson 2001: 8–10).

The nymphs were often associated with Pan and with Artemis, the goddess of nature, wild animals, and young virgin girls. But the nymphs also have a sen-

sual and intimate, even sexual atmosphere surrounding them in the myths — it should be noted that *nymphē* is the Greek word for bride. They can have sexual relations with humans, which is rare for Greek goddesses, and they appear in the genealogies of several Trojan heroes. They are the embodiment of the young nubile woman, and therefore desired by both men and gods. A god may leave the nymph with offspring, but her relationships with men can be more problematic. As a divine person she and her desires are usually the centre of the story. A human who becomes involved with the nymphs may get into serious trouble if he displeases them, yet at the same time they are socially important to humans because some became mothers to heroes and therefore ancestresses to families whose claim to their social standing is based on this genealogy (Larson 2001: 64–66).

Divinities associated with vegetation tend to die and reappear, such as Adonis who had much in common with the Mesopotamian Tammuz. Loved by Aphrodite, Adonis was killed by boars on the island of Crete, and his death gave rise to the red anemone, as well as the red rose. During the yearly Andoneia celebrations, women planted seeds in a shallow bowl of soil, the Adonis gardens, which were placed on the flat roofs. The seeds sprouted and flowered very quickly, but then died just as swiftly. The celebration can be seen as a symbol for the brief life of flowers and of Adonis himself (March 1998: 19–20; Apollodorus, *The Library*, III. 14. 3–4).

In addition, the weather was controlled by gods, namely the wind gods, the four *anemoi*. Notus was the wet, storm-bringing south wind of late summer and early autumn who lived in the far south, in Aithiopia, while Eurus, the east wind of the autumn, dwelt in the far east, near the palace of the sun god Helios. Boreas, the north wind with his purple wings and icy breath, and Zephyrus, the west wind and god of spring, lived together in a palace in Thrace (Homer, *Iliad*, IX. 5; Homer, *Odyssey*, v. 295). Horses that had been fathered by the winds were the fastest of all as stated already in the *Iliad* (Homer, *Iliad*, xx. 219; see also Aelian, *On the Characteristics of Animals*, IV. 6). If the main winds were male, then the cooling breezes were the female aurai, nymphs, and daughters of the wind god Boreas (or Oceanus). Even clouds could be given mythical personages, usually as nymphs. Nephele was one of these, a cloud nymph who married Athamas of Orchomenos, Boeotia. As the mother of Helle and Phrixus, she sent them the ram with the Golden Fleece to save them from their evil step-mother who wanted to have them sacrificed (March 1998: 321).

The nature deities could also be seen in terms of political aspects. Gaia (the Earth) was perhaps not a major figure in the Ancient Greek cult, but from the sixth century BCE onwards she tended to have a politico-philosophical

dimension, so that she was not only responsible for sustaining vegetation and growth but also demanded respect and 'sustainable development' (Burkert 1985: 175). During the same period, the divine character of the phenomena of nature came into conflict with the 'modern', sceptically 'rational' philosophy (Dowden 1992: 39–49). A famous case is the philosopher Anaxagoras, in the latter half of the fifth century, who described the sun as a glowing stone. According to Plato (Plato, *Symposium*, 220d), the sun, Helios, was greeted as a life-giver each morning at sunrise, at least by pious people such as Socrates, and was worshipped especially on the island of Rhodes with its famous giant statue of Helios. Anaxagoras's irreverent statement was therefore dangerous, since Helios, riding his chariot over the sky, would surely take revenge. Anaxagoras was duly expelled from Athens (Burkert 1985: 316).

The Landscape of the Underworld

The succession of the Olympian gods meant that the world was divided into three zones, each ruled by one of three brothers. Heaven was ruled by Zeus, the sea by Poseidon, and the underworld by Hades/Ploutos. Yet the underworld also contained a mythical and invisible landscape with a very distinct geography, although the ancient writers do not agree on its details. It had several entries from the world of the living through caves or lakes, placed around the ancient world. The Romans considered one of these to be Avernus, a crater near Cumae. Persephone entered the underworld both in Eleusis and on Sicily. Famous openings to the underworld were found at the 'bottomless' lake at Lerna, the centre for a mystery cult of Dionysus. The lake was in fact a freshwater lagoon that was separated by barrier dunes from the Aegean Sea. Due to deforestation, the rate of silt deposits increased and it became a malarial marsh that was finally drained in the nineteenth century (Zangger 1991).

Hades was the god of the underworld, and he also gave his name to his realm.¹⁰ It was a misty and gloomy place, also known as Erebus. The dead were ferried across the river Acheron, the river of sorrow — that is, if the living had provided them with the money to pay the ferryman; otherwise they had to roam the shore. A series of rivers bordered and limited the underworld: Styx, the river of hate, was the boundary to the upper world; Cocytos, the river of wailing, flowed into Acheron; the Phlegethon was a stream of fire; and Lethe, the river of forgetfulness, was where all memory was erased from the souls.

¹⁰ Hades was also known as Pluto, the god of riches, since he enriched mankind with wealth coming from the earth (March 1998: 324).

The description in Plato's *Phaedo* (Plato, *Phaedo*, 113) paints a magnificent picture of the underworld, of Phlegethon running through a vast region burning with fire where it widens into a lake larger than the Mediterranean Sea and boiling with water and mud. It passes by, but does not mix its water with, the Acherusian Lake, where the souls are waiting to be reborn in Plato's underworld, and from there it winds its way down to the lower levels of Tartarus. In our physical world the lake Acherousia and the river Acheron are found near Parga in north-western Greece.¹¹ By the river are the remains of a famous *necromanteion*, an oracle of the dead, which was also seen as an entrance to the underworld. Mystery religions of the fourth century BCE taught their adherents about another river named *Mnemosyne*, 'memory'; it was believed that those souls who drank from it would obtain omniscience. Through the secret rituals the dead soul could hope for a happier afterlife (Burkert 1985: 293–304). Both Lethe and Mnemosyne also appeared as fountains in the rituals at the Trophonios oracle in Boeotia, where those wanting to consult the oracle would drink their water before making consultations (Pausanias, *Description of Greece*, ix. 39. 7–8; March 1998: 391–92).

In Hades' palace the souls were judged by the underworld judges Minos, Rhadamanthus, and Aeacus. They were then sent off for punishment: to Tartarus if they were evil or impious; if they were good, to Elysium, the island of the blessed, to dwell with the heroes; or to the Field of Asphodel if they were, as most souls, merely indifferent and ordinary. In song 11 of the *Odyssey*, Homer described this place as being without hope, where the dead shades toiled mechanically without identity, reawakened through libations of blood only for short periods.

The Ritual Landscape

This mythical landscape was also a ritual one. Greek cult has often been connected in our minds to great architecture, temples and sanctuaries with massive amounts of monuments, such as sculptures of all sizes. It is fair to say, however, that this was only one part of the cultic and ritual life. The rituals took place in a specific landscape and needed few human installations: a cult focus, a demarcation line (*temenos*), water, and perhaps a tree (Burkert 1985: 86–87), but no specific installations or statues were necessary. A small sanctuary such as this would have been like the one described by Pausanias as a 'sanctuary of Pan, by which is

¹¹ Lake Avernus in Italy was also identified as the Acherusian lake.

an oak' (Pausanias, *Description of Greece*, VIII. 54. 4) and although many small cult sites have existed, they have not been excavated as often as the more famous central cult places that yield more finds, architecture, and art objects.

Rituals dedicated to the gods of nature were important because the basis for all ancient society was agriculture and husbandry. Pan, the shepherd god with his goat feet and horns, lived in the wilder and more pastoral landscape. Originally, he was mostly venerated in Arcadia, as previously mentioned, an area known as a rural and pastoral region. If disturbed during his midday sleep he could cause panic. Pausanias (Pausanias, *Description of Greece*, VIII. 54. 6–7) notes that Mt Parthenius, on the border between Arcadia and the Argolid, fostered tortoises whose shells were very suitable for making the body of lyres, but that the men on the mountain were afraid to capture them; nor would they allow others to do it, because they believed the tortoises were sacred to Pan.

The cult of Pan spread to the rest of the Greek world from the fifth century onwards, especially after Pan met the Marathon runner on his way to Sparta by Mt Parthenius and demanded a cult from the Athenians as well (Pausanias, *Description of Greece*, I. 28; March 1998: 296). The presence and appearance of the gods at special locations were good reasons for turning the site into a sacred place, and the site of this meeting was afterwards duly marked by a small sanctuary. A number of sanctuaries appeared in Attica as a result of Pan's expressed wish. Pan and the nymphs were mainly venerated in the many small sanctuaries in the countryside, often in caves, at small altars in groves, or at the homes of the nymphs, that is, by springs and fountains. Typically such a cult did not require any large-scale installations or architecture, except for perhaps some votary reliefs or other votive offerings placed in niches in rocky outcrops or cave walls. These locales are also reflected in mythological tales and traditions; when Odysseus comes back to Ithaca he takes shelter in a cave of the nymphs and prays to them when he awakes (Homer, *Odyssey*, 17. 210–11 and 240–46). Similarly, the *Homeric Hymn to Aphrodite* says of the nymphs that 'the silens and the watchful Hermes lie with them in the depth of lovely caves' (*Homeric Hymns*, v. 263–64). Caves were also often associated with the wild and with animals (Boardman 2002: 105).

Several of Pan's cult caves are known, and modern excavations have explored a few of them. One well-known cave is found on the north-west slope of the Acropolis in Athens (Camp 2001: 119–20; Hurwit 2004; Travlos 1971: 417). The large Corycian cave (60 metres deep and 26 metres high) belonging to the nymphs and Pan at Delphi was excavated by French archaeologists, and a large number of finds were discovered: bone flutes, iron and bronze rings and other jewellery, miniature bronze statutes, and some fifty thousand fragments

of terracotta figures (around 90 per cent of which were women), together with large quantities of pottery and seashells. The majority of the finds dated to the classical period, the fourth and fifth centuries BCE. Most remarkable were the some 23,000 *astragoloi*, or knucklebones, that may have been used in oracular cult activities and which are not known from other cave sites (Amandry and others 1981–84; Larson 2001: 11, 234–38). In the Hill of Pan, close to Marathon in Attica, is the remarkable Cave of Pan, well described by Pausanias: ‘The entrance to it is narrow, but farther in are chambers and baths and the so-called “Pan’s herd of goats,” which are rocks shaped in most respects like to goats’ (Pausanias, *Description of Greece*, I. 32. 7). This group of rocks seems to have attracted the imagination of people who saw in them Pan’s goats taking shelter in the cave, and they therefore became the focus of the cult, probably from a very early period. Excavations show that the cave was already in use during the later Neolithic period (5300–3200 BCE).

The cult in the two-roomed Pan cave at Vari (Larson 2001: 242–43; Schörner and Goette 2004) started in the fifth century BCE, perhaps as a result of the gods’ presumed intervention in the Battle of Marathon. The cult has been seen as an initiation cult, primarily involving the nymphs in their roles as nature deities and protectors of brides, the young, and Pan, and the finds are typically terracotta figures, votive reliefs, pottery, and jewellery. Some inscriptions are among them, such as an inscribed dedication from ‘Skyron the goat-herd’. The renewed Late Roman cult use was, according to Schörner and Goette (Schörner and Goette 2004), presumably Christian.¹²

Several divinities were rural. The story of the theft of Apollo’s cattle begins in Thessaly during a hot summer midday, where Apollo was tricked by his newborn half-brother Hermes, son of the nymph Maia and Zeus and the god of thieves, trickery, travellers, merchants, and good luck. Apollo usually dwelt with his muses on Mt Parnassus, but after he killed the Python in order to possess Delphi, he had been forced to serve as a herdsman in Thessaly. Falling asleep under a tree in the midday heat, Apollo did not notice that little Hermes put boots on the feet of the cattle and led them to Pylos where he hid them in a grotto, except for two which he sacrificed. Apollo followed him to Pylos in his search of the cattle, but there were no tracks to be found. Finally Hermes confessed, giving as a peace offering the lyre that he had just invented, and made of a tortoise shell, a few branches, and the sinews of the sacrificed cattle (*Homeric*

¹² For more information on caves to the nymphs and Pan and the finds in them including votive reliefs throughout Greece, see Larson 2001: 226–67.

Hymns, IV, to *Hermes*). Both were thus pastoral gods, patrons of music, and had prophetic powers, although in this respect Apollo's position was superior.

The water sources and their divine protectors or personifications were important for men, and Burkert (Burkert 1985: 174) suggested that each city worshipped its river and spring. References to water resources are frequent in the text often connected with myth, legend, and cults. Water was also important in rituals, and some rituals needed water from certain sources, holy springs or rivers. By the Argive Heraion was the brook called 'Water of Freedom', used by the Hera priestesses in purifications and 'for such sacrifices as are secret', according to Pausanias (Pausanias, *Description of Greece*, II. 17. 1).

Water sources used in the rituals were often surrounded by narratives that brought them into the mythological landscape. Since many waters or springs were thought to be able to inspire those who drank of them, the nymphs connected with them could also inspire men with prophetic powers, and confer upon them the gift of poetry (Pausanias, *Description of Greece*, IV. 27. 2; IX. 3. 5; IX. 34. 3; Plutarch, *Aristides*, XI). The nymph Castalia, fleeing from Apollo's advances, dived into the spring at the base of Mt Parnassus at Delphi, which was then named after her. The water of Castalia was said to be linked with that of the prophetic spring Cassotis (also named after a nymph), from which the Pythia drank to be filled with prophetic inspiration (Pausanias, *Description of Greece*, x. 24. 7). The water from the Castalia spring was also sacred, used both to clean the Delphian temples and to inspire poets. The water of both was believed to come from one of two rivers, Akheloos in Aitolia or Kephisos in Phokaea; it first appeared as the Cassotis spring on the slopes of the Parnassus, then it disappeared and reappeared as Castalia. In this manner the water resources at Delphi had a firm place in the sacred rites, and thus they existed simultaneously as real water sources, as ritual resources, and in the mythical landscape.

Naturally rivers also attracted rituals and cults of various kinds. Water oracles were found in different places, usually depending on whether the item one threw into the water floated or sank. Close by Epidaurus was the water of Ino, where people threw barley cakes at the festival of the nymph Ino. If they sank it meant good luck for the thrower, but if they floated, it was judged a bad sign (Pausanias, *Description of Greece*, III. 23. 8). Another oracle spring at the sanctuary of Demeter at Patrae gave infallible prognoses for sick people. A mirror was tied to a cord and let down just far enough to touch the water with its rim; after praying to Demeter and burning incense, one could look into the mirror, which then showed the patient either alive or dead (Pausanias, *Description of Greece*, VII. 21. 12). The water in rivers also appears in initiation rituals; for example, the river Pamisos in Messenia and its temple were the focus of a cult

where at the initiation of boys and girls they dedicated their hair to the river (Pausanias, *Description of Greece*, IV. 3. 10, IV. 31. 4).

Offerings of various kinds were thus made at springs and rivers, and at spring houses, where spring water was collected. Burkert (Burkert 1985: 175) states that the sacrificing of animals in some of these water cults was so intense that it polluted the natural resources, as is recorded in the case of the important spring at Lerna in the Argolid. Other sources, however, stress the importance of avoiding polluting the water. The rules of behaviour listed by Hesiod (seventh century BCE) in his *Work and Days*, discussed by Cole (Cole 2004: 30–35), includes the prohibition of urinating in the waters of rivers flowing towards the seas or in springs (Hesiod, *Works and Days*, 757–59), or of wading over a river until one has looked into the streams, washed one's hands, and prayed, because to cross a river with unwashed hands meant wickedness, which would make the gods resentful and cause them to send painful punishments later on (Hesiod, *Works and Days*, 737–41). Water signified cleanliness, and thus to pollute it was asking for trouble. As Cole points out, *Work and Days*, directed towards a male audience, emphasizes the importance of segregating human physical processes from the divine (Cole 2004: 32).

At Mt Lykaion in Arcadia runs the river Neda, which unusually for Greece, flowed with equal volume in both winter and summer. When there was a drought, the priest of Lycaean Zeus

praying towards the water and making the usual sacrifices, lowers an oak branch to the surface of the spring, not letting it sink deep. When the water has been stirred up there rises a vapour, like mist; after a time the mist becomes cloud, gathers to itself other clouds, and makes rain fall on the land of the Arcadians. (Pausanias, *Description of Greece*, VIII. 38. 3–4)

Through the ritual the living water was persuaded to appear as much needed rainfall; as noted previously, the water was perceived as a living entity, usually a male divinity, although this is not clearly stated in the case of Neda.

Weather was important in farming and sailing communities, and those wind gods who could bring bad weather could be banned through rituals. Lipsos, the south-west wind that could destroy the budding vines was banned in Methana with the following ritual: 'while the wind is still rushing on, two men cut in two a cock whose feathers are all white, and run round the vines in opposite directions, each carrying half of the cock. When they meet at their starting place, they bury the pieces there' (Pausanias, *Description of Greece*, IX. 34. 3). The encircling of the vineyard by the runners carrying the bloody sacrifice protected it. Altars to the winds could also be established: yearly sacrifices took place at the Athena sanctuary at Titane (Pausanias, *Description of Greece*, II. 12. 1).

Probably the best-known wind sacrifice is that of Agamemnon sacrificing his daughter Iphigenia before the voyage to Troy.

Water was seen as a cleansing agent, as a marker or as a boundary, as an entrance to the underworld, but also as vehicle for healing. Since sickness often was explained as a punishment from the divine world, or in a more medical fashion as the imbalance of the bodily humours, to be cleansed by water was one of the ways people could heal. At Samicum in Elis was the Cave of the Anigris Nymphs, whose water could cleanse skin diseases. One first had to pray to the nymphs and to promise some sacrifice or other, after which 'he wipes the unhealthy parts of his body. Then, swimming through the river, he leaves his old uncleanness in its water, coming up sound and of one colour' (Pausanias, *Description of Greece*, v. 5. 11). Close by, at Heracleia in Elis, was another sanctuary of the nymphs called the Ionides, a spring that cured those who bathed in it of all sorts of aches and pains (Pausanias, *Description of Greece*, vi. 22. 7). The cold water spring Alyssus in Arcadia even cured people bitten by rabid dogs and therefore was called 'Curer of Madness' (Pausanias, *Description of Greece*, viii. 19. 1–3).

The cults of the winds reflected the local climate of the regions. People would ask for better weather, which in the case of the Spartans meant relief from the heat of the east wind Euros. On the island of Keos the cool Etesian winds were called upon at the heliacal rising of Sirius, while the north wind was calmed at Ephesus (Burkert 1985: 175). The winds could also be helpful, at times assisting the Greek communities against non-Greeks. Yielding to the Athenian prayers in both 492 and 480 BCE, the north wind Boreas destroyed the attacking Persian fleet (Herodotus, *Histories*, vii. 189).

*Markers of the Divine in the Landscape*¹³

Place is a type of object. Places and objects define space, giving it a geometric personality. (Tuan 1977: 17)

The markers of a place further defined it as belonging to the mythical/religious sphere. Markers could take all kinds of shapes, and this is the reason why Pausanias mentioned many examples of markers of divinity in nature, not as

¹³ Cosmological ideas could be expressed in the sanctuaries, for example the omphalos, the navel of the world, in Delphi. Richer wants to see astrological significance, for example, a zodiacal wheel centred around Delphi and Delos (Richer 1994), but I believe he goes too far; there is no evidence that any unified system was needed for the placement of sanctuaries in the landscape. The polis states were usually fiercely independent.

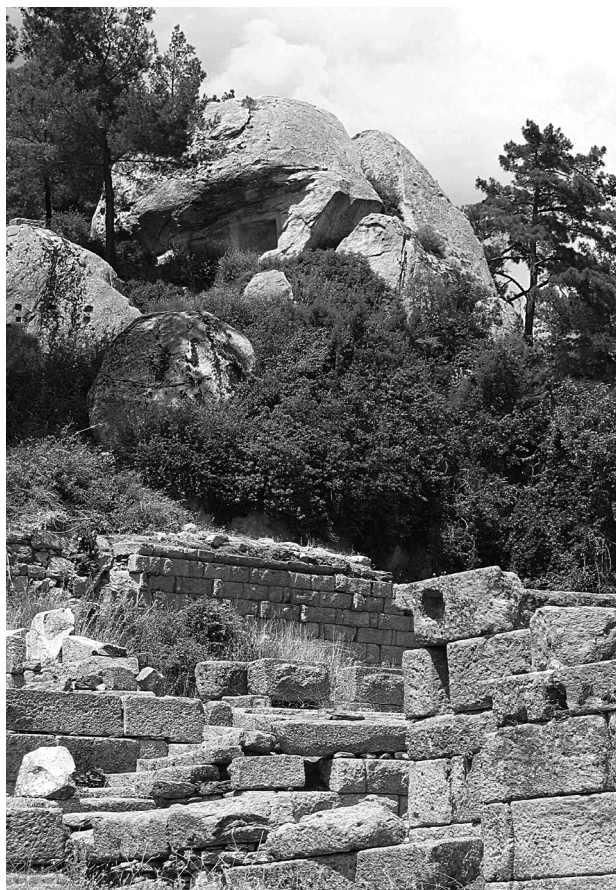


Figure 22. The split rock at the sanctuary of Zeus, Labraunda, Caria, south-west Turkey. Photo: Lars Karlsson. Reproduced with permission.

natural phenomena per se. Caves, rocks, stones, and strangely shaped trees attracted storytelling and cults.¹⁴

In the mountainous landscape of many areas of Greece, mountain peaks were often markers of divinity. Zeus was prominent on the mountain tops — as was fitting for a weather and storm god — and his prominence was marked in the mountains by sanctuaries, altars, and statues. The god often got an epithet after the name of the mountain, as in Zeus Lykaïos on Mt Lykaion. Around Athens, Pausanias records several statues and altars to gods: a statue of Zeus Hymettios, a statue for both Zeus the Rain God and Apollo the Foreseer on Hymettus, and

¹⁴ Boardman discusses the natural features and myths with a useful collection of testimonia (Boardman 2002: 104–11).

an image of Zeus Anchesmios on the small mountain Anchesmos. On Parnes he records a bronze Zeus Parnethius and an altar to Zeus Semaleus (Zeus the Sign-Giver) as well as another altar where sacrifices were performed to two manifestations of Zeus, both as the Rain God and as Averter of Ills. He also notes statues of Athena both on Pendelikon and on Hymettus (Pausanias, *Description of Greece*, I. 32. 2). Athens was thus surrounded by sanctuaries and statues of the gods, protecting the land.

Hills and mountains were also thought to be under the control of the divinities. Lycabettus Hill in Athens was said to be carried to its present place by Athena. The hill's shape as a breast may have contributed to a story that identified it as the nursing place of Asclepius, Mt Titthion, 'The Nipple' (Pausanias, *Description of Greece*, II. 26. 4).

Special or unusual formations, such as meteorites or man-shaped outcrops (as in the case of Niobe), attracted mythical stories and cult activities. Natural seats in the mountainside or the rock were seen as seats of the gods, the wreck of the ship of Odysseus was recognized in cliffs off Corfu, and balancing rocks were identified as stony ballots, dice, or gaming boards (Boardman 2002: 104–08). Stones were marked out as seats, such as the Mirthless Stone at Eleusis where the grieving Demeter sat mourning after her daughter was spirited away by Hades (Apollodorus, *The Library*, I. 5. 1). The walls of the town of Megara were built to the tunes of Apollo's lyre, and there people could point to the stone where he placed the lyre between melodies, since the stone sounded like a lyre when one struck it (Pausanias, *Description of Greece*, I. 42. 1–2; Boardman 2002: 108).

The great rock that hovers over the sanctuary of the axe-carrying Zeus Labrandeus at Labraunda in Caria, south-west Turkey has split in two, as if cloven by a great axe (Figure 22). It is positioned immediately above a well that springs from beneath the ground. The setting is probably the reason that a cult was introduced on the site, as suggested by Karlsson (Karlsson 2010; Karlsson, forthcoming). Clefs and markings were also identified as the remains of events from the mythical past, such as the famous mark of Poseidon's trident or Zeus's bolt on the Acropolis. The latter was so important that it was given access to open air through holes in both the flooring and the ceiling of the Erechteion (Boardman 2002: 109–10).

As previously mentioned, both natural caves and man-made formations such as old rock-cut tombs could attract cults and rituals, usually of pastoral divinities. In general the caves belonging to myths and rituals were located beyond the urban setting, being things that were hidden and not easily accessible. Others were connected to stories of hidden births and the nursing of babies who

needed a safe hiding place, for example the wine god Dionysus or heroes like Dardanus or the Sibyl Herophile in her cave at Erythrai (Pausanias, *Description of Greece*, III. 24. 4; x. 12. 6–7). There were also caves that were famed as meeting places for lovers or as the homes and oracles of prophets, as in the case of the cave of Trophonius at Lebadeia near Delphi (Pausanias, *Description of Greece*, IX. 37. 7; Boardman 2002: 104–05). Some such cult places in caves lasted for a long time, having been later transformed into Christian sanctuaries.

Special vegetation also attracted stories and rituals. Something that was different or something wild (a grove in a cultivated region or the presence of wild olive trees among the cultivated olives) was remarkable and could mark a special place, for example a sanctuary and/or a narrative. A grove of wild olive trees among the cultivated olives close by the sanctuary of Asclepius at Epidaurus was a hero shrine for the girl Hynetho, killed by her brother in a family fight. The trees of the grove were sacred to the heroine, which meant that it was forbidden to carry any twigs or branches from the trees outside the grove (Pausanias, *Description of Greece*, II. 28. 3–7). In the sanctuary of Thearian Apollo at Troizen in the northern Peloponnese, the wild olive tree by the statue of Hermes Polygius was in fact thought to be Heracles' club that he had once leaned up against the statue (Pausanias, *Description of Greece*, II. 31. 3).

A unique formation of trees also marked a special place for a visitor passing the site, much as a group of cypress trees today marks a burial place or a church. As described by Pausanias (Pausanias, *Description of Greece*, III. 14. 8–9), Platanistas, close to Sparta, was the Plane-Tree Grove, which consisted of an unbroken ring of tall plane-trees with an open place in its centre, surrounded by a moat. One entered by crossing the moat over bridges. On each of the two bridges were placed images of Heracles and Lycurgus, the Spartan lawgiver. This area was used as a fighting arena for the youths of Sparta. The preparations for the fight included events such as a dog sacrifice and a fight by trained boars; the company whose boar happened to win usually claimed the victory in Plane-Tree Grove. It is uncertain to what extent this was a modified natural setting or if it was totally man-made. The Lycaean games in Arcadia took place in a sanctuary dedicated to Pan, also surrounded by a grove. Here there was a racecourse and a running track, denoting games for both horses and men (Pausanias, *Description of Greece*, VIII. 38. 4–5).

Not only groves, but also single and unusual trees were noted for their great age, shape, or size and therefore ascribed a connection with heroes or gods. Thus a strangely twisted olive tree by the roadside in the neighbourhood of Epidaurus was said to have been twisted by the ancient strongman Heracles (Pausanias, *Description of Greece*, II. 28. 2). Such trees could also be identified



Figure 23. View from Zeus's altar on Lykaion towards Apollo's temple at Bassae, Lykaion, Arcadia, Greece. The fire on the ash altar would have been visible from Bassae and several other sanctuaries in the region. Photo: Gullög Nordquist. Reproduced with permission.

as famous trees from earlier stories; thus the remains of a very old plane-tree at Aulis in Boeotia was even identified at the time of Pausanias (second century CE) as being a tree mentioned by Homer in the *Iliad* (Homer, *Iliad*, II. 307) some seven hundred years earlier.

In other words, special features or traits in nature, whether mountain tops, caves, or strange stones or trees, attracted interest and needed a myth, stories, and perhaps even a cult to explain them. Once a site received its history and its place in the topography of people's minds, it was changed so that people's experiences of and emotions connected to the place were different; the place itself was changed and was set apart from those places that were not infused with such ideas. The site could then be further reshaped by human intervention to fit the story even better. This is also true in current times (Bradley 2000: 97–113). The big ash altar on the mountain top at Mt Lycaeon raised the mountain to a growing and even more impressive height, and the fires on it signalled the god's presence over the whole landscape as well as other sanctuaries (Figure 23). The strange tree or grove could be placed in a formalized setting that accentuated its 'backstory'. At the enclosed Minoan so-called peak sanctuaries from the Bronze Age, terracing offered a place for architecture, but could also, as in the case of the rock fissure at Juktas, accentuate a natural feature that could be

used for offerings (Bradley 2000: 102–03). Natural places were modified and subject to continuous change and adaption. Human agency divided places into different loci, identifying them as being suitable for different activities and perhaps accessible to different groups of people (Bradley 2000: 104).

Additionally, places that were disputed by the poleis could be protected and even banned for humans; when given over to the gods, the human quarrel was neutralized. The Holy Mountain, *hiera orgas* — territory disputed by Megara and Athens and therefore not divided into plots for agriculture — was seen as a holy land under the protection of Demeter and Kore (Thucydides, *History of the Peloponnesian War*, I. 139). The Pelargikon or Pelasgikon, which took in most of the north slope of the Acropolis at Athens, was out of bounds for the refugees from the countryside who streamed into the city at the time of the Peloponnesian War. This was due to the fact that access had been forbidden by a curse and because of the ominous fragments of a Pythian oracle which said ‘Leave the Pelasgian parcel desolate, woe worth the day that men inhabit it!’ (Thucydides, *History of the Peloponnesian War*, II. 17; Camp 2001; Cole 2004: 57).

The Landscape of the Past and the Ancestors

The landscape was thus filled with memories of the past, narratives, and stories. Since myth was so directly linked to the physical landscape, the mythical places coincided with places one could actually see and experience. The mountains where Zeus was said to have been born really existed; the rivers, flowers, and birds that had been human could be seen and heard by everyone. The myths of the past were given a physical shape throughout the landscape, as seen from the examples above.

The landscape was, as previously mentioned, also filled with human histories and memories of the deeds of heroes. There were the places where Heracles beat the Hydra at Lerna or shot down the metal-feathered birds at Lake Stymphalos, or the places where Theseus defeated the robbers and evil-doers on his way to Athens. This was also the landscape filled with stories from both one’s own past, the past of one’s family, and the pasts of other poleis: past wars, seasonal changes and political upheavals, the fields that had been cultivated for generations, the olive tress planted by one’s grandfather or the almond grove that one’s grandmother brought as dowry, the paths one trod to fetch water, the place where the donkey broke a leg or where the eagle took a lamb.

Natural features were not only marks of places sacred to the gods, they were equally often marks of historical events and places. In Troizen, several stories are

connected with Hippolytus, Theseus's son who exercised there, and a racecourse in Troizen is named for him. Myrtle with every one of its leaves pierced also grew there, said to be the result of his stepmother Phaedra's despair: when she could find no relief for her passion for Hippolytus, she would vent her spleen upon the leaves of this myrtle using one of her hairpins (Pausanias, *Description of Greece*, I. 22. 2; II. 32. 3). Boardman somewhat unromantically remarks that it sounded more to him like a local infestation of bugs (Boardman 2002: 113).

Place names were then, as in modern times through folk etymologies, linked to the stories and myths of the past. Apollodorus explains the etymology of a place name, Trapezus, 'the table place', by linking it to the great narrative current of Greek mythology, namely that concerning the origin of the cult of Zeus Lykaïos in Arcadia. Zeus, wanting to test King Lycaon and his sons, came to them in the form of a day-labourer. They

offered him hospitality and having slaughtered a male child of the natives, they mixed his bowels with the sacrifices, and set them before him [...]. But Zeus in disgust upset the table at the place which is still called Trapezus, and blasted Lycaon and his sons by thunderbolts. (Apollodorus, *The Library*, III. 8. 1)¹⁵

Other sources have Trapezus as one of Lycaon's sons (Pausanias, *Description of Greece*, VIII. 3. 2); the name in actuality probably refers to a flat hill.

Long-living trees, such as the olive or oak, may be signals of a heroic event or the tomb of a hero. The hero Melikertes' body was brought to the shore near a pine tree close to Corinth by a dolphin that was seen by Pausanias (Pausanias, *Description of Greece*, II. 1. 3), and Pliny (Pliny, *Natural History*, XVI. 238–40) mentions a number of trees associated with mythical personages: plane-trees planted by Agamemnon; an oak tree at a tomb in Troy, and the tree where Io, during her time as a cow, was tethered; the tree where the unlucky silen Marsyas was hung to be flayed; and the olive tree at Olympia where Heracles cut his wreath of victory.

The distant past, the cultural memory of the period of the heroes, was present in the classical period (Boardman 2002). The genealogy in the Homeric epics continued to be important and acted as the basis for political arguments throughout many generations. The places mentioned were also venerated. The Catalogue of Ships in the *Iliad* enumerated the fleet of Agamemnon, all the ships' contingents, who sailed with which commander, how many ships each hero commanded, and where they all come from.

¹⁵ The references to human sacrifice exist also in other variants; see <<http://lykaionexcavation.org/>> [accessed 19 March 2013].



Figure 24. The megalithic walls of Mycenae and the Lion Gate at Mycenae, Greece. These landmarks were clearly visible in later periods of antiquity and associated with the tales of the ill-fated royal house of Agamemnon, as told by Homer in the eighth century BCE.
Photo: Gullög Nordquist. Reproduced with permission.

The long-lasting monuments, architectural or otherwise, became objects of a diachronical change of ideas in their own right, some representing older stages, others fitting with intermediate or 'modern' times. In other words, even in antiquity the old monuments were seen as products of cultural memories and heritage, and they were used to enhance contemporary ideas, ideology, and politics. Ruins of what we call the Greek Bronze Age were also visible to the people of classical Greece. Places such as Mycenae and Tiryns were never forgotten, but were always identifiable by name, mentioned by the ancient authors, and already visited by travellers and tourists in antiquity. One must remember that the ruins were more than one thousand years older than Pausanias and represented the past in the same way that Viking remains or early medieval churches do today. The ruins were preserved and put into a storyline that connected contemporary Greek societies to the heroes of the past (Figure 24). Explanations for the remains were found ranging from the methods used to build the large walls (said to have been built by the ancient Cyclops) to identifying various parts of the ruins at Mycenae in connection with the tragic events of the royal

family of Agamemnon. This recreation of the past in the ancient past (for us) of classical Greece also included what we can call renovations of the remains of this cultural inheritance (Fitton 1995: 14–27; Boardman 2002: 45–78).

The ancestors and the founders of poleis, families, and sanctuaries were present in the landscape in the shape of burial monuments both of the past and of more recent times, and in the form of shrines to dead heroes (whether real or mythical). This was a chthonic landscape with burial monuments and hero shrines, local and national heroes that were also sometimes expressed in the landscape itself, by or as rivers, springs, flowers, trees, etc., often very precisely placed in the geographical space. The history and the ancestors lived in this landscape in the form of graves marking the old battlegrounds, as in Marathon and Plataiai, and the roads leading to the settlement, connoting to everyone the importance of it due to the number and splendour of those graves, and the illustrious names on their *stelai* (Whitley 2001: 92–98, 363–75).

Pausanias saw a large number of hero shrines and graves during his travels throughout Greece. The old tombs could be reused, and a cult of dead heroes take place by the old graves ascribed to them. So, for example, the well-known heroes from the Trojan War Agamemnon and Menelaus and his wife Helen had cults at Mycenae and Sparta respectively (Antonaccio 1994: 147–66). It was important to connect places with names. In the Homeric epics, heroic tombs even earlier than the Trojan War are seen as landmarks and identified with the old Anatolian *tumuli* or burial mounds. Other heroes and heroines were nameless dead whose graves accidentally had been disturbed by later people, and were appeased with a cult at the grave. However, as pointed out by Boardman (Boardman 2002: 52), where there is evidence of a cult at an old grave, there is no formal identification of the recipient by an inscription, for example. Similarly, where a hero shrine has been excavated there is often not a grave. The problem lies, as he suggests, in the definition of ‘hero’ in contrast to ‘ancestor’ and in the diachronical time perspective; the identification may be much later than the cult itself. Various periods of the Greek and later Roman cultures have populated the lands with the names and cults of ancient heroes and heroines (Boardman 2002: 55; Ekroth 2002).

The gods could also decide, or at least give advice on, where to settle. Especially famous is the role of Apollo at Delphi during the colonization wave from the eighth century BCE, when the *oikist*, the leader of the colonization venture, was to regularly consult with the oracle. Other gods were also involved in settling humans; Pausanias tells about the city of Boeae, said to have been founded by Boeus, who collected the expelled inhabitants from three other cities, Etis, Aphrodisias, and Side. The inhabitants were naturally anxious to know where

they ought to settle and received their answer from an oracle (Pausanias does not say which one) so that Artemis would show them where they were to dwell:

When therefore they had gone on shore, and a hare appeared to them, they looked upon the hare as their guide on the way. When it dived into a myrtle tree, they built a city on the site of the myrtle, and down to this day they worship that myrtle tree, and name Artemis Saviour.¹⁶ (Pausanias, *Description of Greece*, III.22.11–12)

Malkin (Malkin 1987: 142) suggested that promontories were often selected when a place had to be found for colonies; they were visible from far away and were suitable places to found the sanctuaries and build the temples so necessary for the city. A central place, a ritual space, was also needed from which one could measure the surrounding or outside world. In Athens this was the Altar of the Twelve Gods in the Agora (Cole 2004: 76).

The Hippocratic writings, especially *Airs, Waters, Places*, describe the ideal placement of a city. As with most temples, the healthy city was to face the rising sun in the east, which would make the population healthier and childbirth easier for women. Preferably, it would also take its water from high ground. Towns facing south that were exposed to too much moisture risked sterility and miscarriage in its women, convulsions and asthma in its children, and diarrhoea, fevers, skin diseases, and haemorrhoids in its men, while those facing north had hard, brackish waters which caused other sicknesses in their population (Cole 2004: 159–60).

Setting the Border

The landscape was also filled with borders of different kinds, between the right and left side of the road, between villages, between sacred places and the outer world, and so on. Bakke (Bakke 2008: 95) describes a multiplicity of boundaries. A border may consist of natural dividers, such as rivers and mountains, but also of things made by humans, such as roads and markers. Hermes was a god of boundaries and transgressions of boundaries, which meant that he was also the protector of those crossing the boundaries: herdsmen, thieves, heralds, merchants, graves, and the dead. He was also, as *psychopompos*, the one who brought the dead souls to Charon's ferry (Burkert 1985: 158).

Borders were important in the sacred landscape as well: between the sacred centre of the sanctuary itself and its estate and the land outside, between

¹⁶ That is, the inhabitants called Artemis by the epithet Saviour.



Figure 25. Stone inscription, reading 'I am the *horos* of the agora', Athens, Greece. Photo: Gullög Nordquist. Reproduced with permission.

the ritual places within the poleis, the town sanctuaries. The Agora required respect because it was the focus of so many important activities that needed protection and was therefore under special sacred rules. It was, as with the sanctuaries, marked by boundary stones and water sources where people could clean themselves, in the form of *perrhirhanteria* or water basins. As already noted, sanctuaries encircled the land of the poleis, as in the case of Athens. Likewise smaller sanctuaries were placed around a major one. Naturally, more worldly borders, between fields, between estates, and between the poleis, also needed to be marked.

Border stones, or *horoi*, were placed as markers and signs that one had entered a space that was in some way different from the one that had just been left and may have required special rules to govern one's behaviour. Within the *temenos* (border) of the sanctuary, rules of pollution and cleanliness reigned and devices that controlled pollution were necessary. The sacred space could be

ringed by water *perrhirhanteria*, or in the case of important sanctuaries, such as the Acropolis of Athens, by a ring of smaller sanctuaries (Cole 2004: 58). In order to avoid *miasma*, the ritual pollution, within the sanctuary, people had to be ritually purified. It may have meant a period of avoiding some types of bodily activities such as sexual intercourse, or eating certain foods, being free or at least purified of serious crimes; menstruating women or women who had given birth recently were of course often excluded as well. People were to wash and wear clean clothes, sometimes of a special colour. Death and childbirth within the *temenos* of the sanctuary did not occur even at the healing centres of Asclepius. Similar rules governed access to the main meeting place of the polis, the Agora, also under divine protection (Figure 25).

The rules for pollution and cleanliness stress the divide between the divine world and that of humans, necessary since they were so closely interconnected. They also emphasize the gender divide. The 'nature' in women's bodily functions (menstruation and childbirth) was seen as potentially dangerous. Similar attitudes also appear in the rules of Hesiod (Hesiod, *Works and Days*, 707–59), which as Cole states, were directed towards a male audience and suggest that a man must acknowledge the power of the divine in certain significant areas of human life or risk retribution from the gods (Cole 2004: 31–32). Hesiod also stresses the importance of segregating human physical processes — such as urination, defecation, and sexual intercourse — from the divine, since they could, in some situations, compromise the divine in the physical world, in fire, flowing water, etc. The boundaries between the sexes were also to be respected; so, for example a man could not wash in a woman's bathwater (Cole 2004: 32–33).

The boundaries to the divine sphere were thus guarded by rules of pollution. Questions concerning pollution, how to avoid it and rectify any transgressions, needed the advice of specialists, the gods themselves, who were consulted in questions of pollution, ritual and ritual performance, and legal procedures. One important god in this respect was Apollo, whose authority extended throughout the Greek world. Cities and official delegations from all over the Greek world turned to his sanctuary at Delphi. Since the oracle gave answers only once a month it was important to impress the god and his priests with proper embassies and votives to the sanctuary. Apollo is also connected with the female divinity Themis, the personification of rights, social order, and established customs. *The Homeric Hymn to Apollo* speaks of her as the nurse, *kourotrophos*, of Apollo (*Homeric Hymns*, XXI; Cole 2004: 71–72).

Sanctuaries needed markers to define the sacral space of the *temenos* that was the boundary between the sanctuary and the surrounding world. Yet those spaces that were sacred in their own right, such as mountains, rivers, and springs,

required no human agency in order to mark their sacred status (Cole 2004: 57; Rudhardt 1958: 224–25). Still others required more protection, especially in times of hardship. Thucydides (Thucydides, *History of the Peloponnesian War*, II. 17), when describing the influx of refugees from the countryside into Athens at the occasion of the Peloponnesian War, distinguishes between those sanctuaries within the city that could be inhabited in this time of crises (with all that this entailed regarding human bodily needs) and those that could not, such as the Acropolis and the Eleusinion. The Acropolis had been marked by the divine in the form of a natural event, the trace of Poseidon's trident on the Acropolis of Athens, and here no cooking utensils were allowed and the disposal of excrement was forbidden (Cole 2004: 58). Other sanctuaries had more leeway, such as those of Pan, who seemed to have allowed more casual entries and even tolerated sexual intercourse (Cole 2004: 58; Borgeaud 1988: 163–64). Yet Pan was in many ways different from other gods: he wanted noise instead of ritual silence; the fourth century playwright Menander says, 'one should not approach this god in silence' (Menander, *Dyskolos*, 433–34).

Larger sanctuaries in themselves contained spaces reserved for different functions and levels of holiness. The sanctuary at Olympia was protected in the entire region between the Alpheus and Kladeus Rivers, but within that area were three degrees of sacredness: from the Stadium to the Altis, which contained most of the sanctuaries, and finally the restricted areas within the Altis. The gods were also landowners through their sanctuaries, which could occupy substantial areas of real estate, and rules and regulations were thus needed when the land was leased out for cultivation (Cole 2004: 59).

Travelling the Roads and the Water

Tilley argued that the flow of movement is a flow of the mind (Tilley 1994: 202). His case concerned the Mesolithic period and explored how ancestral connections between living populations and the past were embodied in the past of the landscape. This is also true of other geographical regions, cultures, and time periods. The ancient carriage roads tended to follow a rather straight line across the landscape, leaving traces in the form of wheel-ruts in the bed-rock. These traces have a standard gauge of c. 1.4 metres and are usually seen as being intentionally carved. When wagons met on the road, one wagon would have to be physically lifted, or else they would have to meet at certain places where they could pass each other. However, the most common way of passing through the landscape would undoubtedly have been on foot, with cargo most often carried by beasts of burden, on simple dirt roads that have been likened to

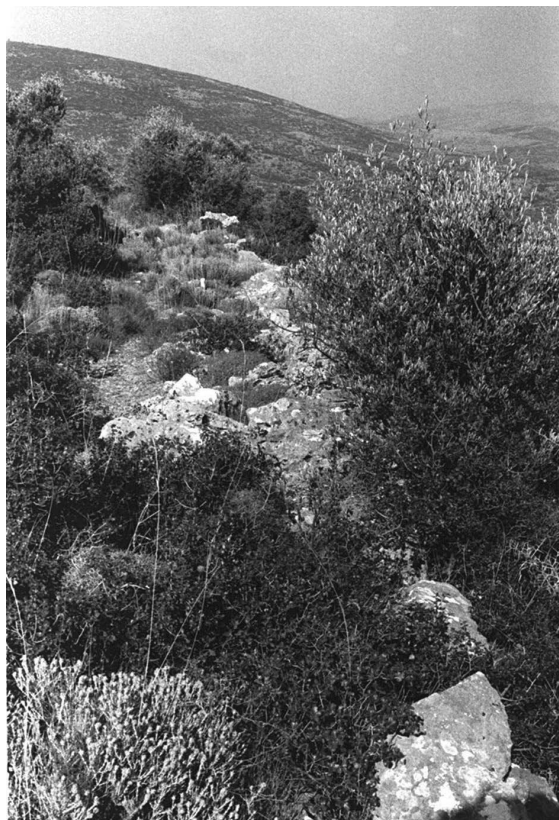


Figure 26. A road of *kalderimia* type, leading from Mycenae towards the north, Greece. Late Bronze Age. Photo: Michael Lindblom. Reproduced with permission.

the early modern *kalderimia*, the caravan roads (Figure 26). They followed the contours of the landscape, radiating from the villages and forming a network between the settlements. These structures were re-enforced with stone or supported by terraces, often fenced on both sides by curtain walls. Some *kalderimia* were in use from the medieval period up to the nineteenth century, and some are used even today, mainly for flocks of animals (Bakke 2008: 90–94).

In ancient Greece the processional roads linking the cities to the local extra-urban cult centres often traversed larger distances linking cities and sanctuaries; for instance, the Sacred Way from Athens to Eleusis was 30 kilometres long. Conversely, these roads led from the god's precinct — his or her real estate — to the human sphere. Roads could also run between two cult foci, forming a network that in Cole's view was centred at Delphi (Cole 2004: 76). The *pompe*, procession, also moved along processional roads from the city border to its urban cultic centre; the Panathenaic procession moved along the well-paved

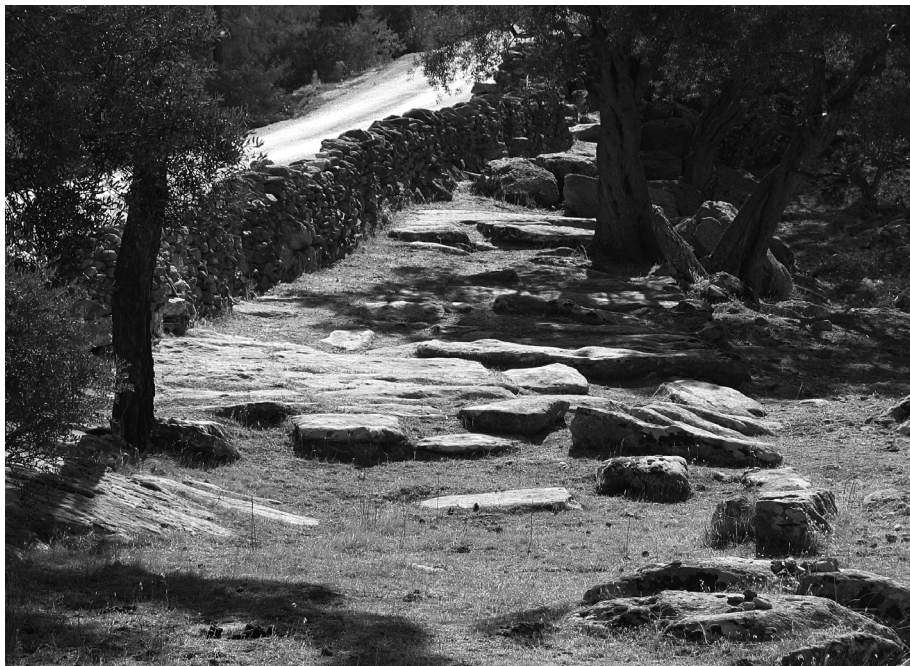


Figure 27. Remains of the processional road from Mylasa on the Carian plain in south-western Turkey up to the sanctuary of Zeus Labrandeus in the mountains, Turkey.

Photo: Lars Karlsson. Reproduced with permission.

Panathenaic road from the Kerameikos — where the sacral paraphernalia, including the large ship on wheels, kept in the *Pompaeon*, on which Athena's new *peplos* was fastened as a sail — to the Acropolis at Athens (Burkert 1985: 99–100).

The sacred roads were, contrary to the ordinary roads, more often paved with stone blocks, such as the road leading from Mylasa to Labraunda in south-west Turkey (see Karlsson, forthcoming) (Figure 27). Along them processions moved from the human part of the landscape, the settlement or the *polis*, over the land, and past both cultivated land and nature outside the settled area, thus in this manner symbolically claiming the land. The procession may have stopped along the way at important places for sacrifices and rituals, finally reaching the sanctuary of the divinities, delineated by a border, the *temenos*, inside which was the focus of cult.

The processional routes were marked both visually and acoustically, enabling the crowd to signify their arrival to the surrounding landscape, those who

lived in it, and the god of their sanctuary. Such signifiers included the crowd of people walking, their festive dress and adornments of garlands, the fillets and twigs in their hands, the processional music, the singing and shouting, the noise of the feet of many people and livestock, the bleating of sacrificial animals, the light of torches, and the rituals observed at specific places along the way. The roads and the sacred processions along them thus linked the human and the divine spheres, in both a physical and ritualistic way. By walking, one prepared oneself for the final rituals that would be carried out upon reaching the sacred area and Bradley (Bradley 2000: 245) fittingly cites a seventeenth-century poem by T. Traherne, which begins, 'By walking men's reversed feet | I chanc'd another world to meet'.

The most famous procession is probably the one between Eleusis and Athens that took place every fifth year on the occasion of the Great Mysteries that were celebrated during nine days in the month of Boedromion (September). On the first day, the fourteenth of Boedromion, the sacred symbols were brought from Eleusis to Athens and the festival was opened. Two days later, the initiates went from Athens to the sea at Phaleron to wash themselves, each carrying a suckling piglet for purification and sacrifice. After further rites, on the nineteenth the great procession with all the *mystai* (initiates) dressed in white passed the gate in Athens that was called 'the gate by which the *mystai* march to the sea'. They moved along the Sacred Way to Eleusis, carrying the sacred symbols and torches and stopping at certain places along the road for further rituals, reaching Eleusis by evening (Burkert 1985: 99; Cole 2004: 76). Once at Eleusis the hidden mysteries took place inside the *temenos* in the Telesterion building. The great procession linked Eleusis to Athens; formally it went from the great Eleusinion at Eleusis to the Eleusinion in Athens and back again, but it was also a manifestation of the important role played by Demeter in the cultivated Attic land, as well as an expression of the worldly power of Athens over the landscape of Attica and its lordship over Megara, which had formerly been an independent city. Along the way there was also a reminder of this past history in the form of a tomb of an Athenian herald, Anthemokritos, killed by the Megarians (Pausanias, *Description of Greece*, I. 36. 3; Dowden 1992: 123).

Another example is the sanctuary of Zeus of Lykaion with its large ash altar and its *temenos* with spaces for the Lycaean festival and games that included athletics as well as horse races. Here was also a sanctuary for Pan. To attend the festivals, the participants, including the horses and chariots as well as sacrificial animals and probably also food and fodder, had to climb the steep mountain-side to the level of the *temenos*. This effort should be seen as a part, more or less ritualized, of the cultic experience. Upon finally reaching the sanctuary and its

rich water resources high above the plain where the games took place, one still had to climb to the top of the mountain, overlooking the wild landscape, in order to reach the ash altar to Zeus. However, people were not allowed to enter into the temenos of Zeus Lykaion at the top of the mountain; anyone who took no notice of the rule and entered inevitably lived no longer than a year afterwards (Pausanias, *Description of Greece*, VIII. 38. 6).

Sight lines connected important points in a network over the landscape, especially important in the mountainous terrain of Greece. From Lykaion one can see several other sanctuaries, including the temple of Apollo at Bassae and a burning sacrificial fire at Zeus Lycaeon's altar. This would have been visible from afar, perhaps visually connected to other altar fires on mountaintop sanctuaries such as the Zeus sanctuary on Mount Elias to the north-east. Consequently, the smoke from all these sacred fires may have been seen to meet each other in the air, symbolically rising together towards the sky.

The Mediterranean landscape is the setting for several travel stories, most famously Homer's *Odyssey* (eighth century BCE). Odysseus's travels over large areas of the Mediterranean are set simultaneously in both the real and the mythological worlds. He travels to known islands and areas, but also to barbarian and even mythical ones, meeting humans, monsters, supernatural beings, and gods, before arriving home at the island of Ithaca in the Ionian Sea. Many attempts have been made to plot out his journey on modern maps and to identify places he encountered with more or less exact locations, in other words to draw the mythical parts of the saga into our reality, which in my mind is a futile exercise. Odysseus the Greek explored the borders of the Greek lands and beyond, the barbarian lands surrounding the Greek civilization, thus defining it as the centre of its own narrative.

The other long travel story set before the Trojan War is an epic poem by Apollonius of Rhodes from the third century BCE, which is inspired by the *Odyssey*. However, in contrast to the earlier poem, the stress is more on human action rather than intervention by divinities. Here the theme of the exploration of distant barbarian lands is even stronger. The Argonauts, the many heroes manning the ship Argo, travelled from Thessaly in northern Greece to Cholcis in the furthest east of the Black Sea to fetch the legendary Golden Fleece. Argo is said to have sailed via the island of Lemnos, to Samothrace, through the Hellespont, to Mysia, to the land of the Bebrycians, then further to Salmydessos in Thrace, on to Mysia again, and then to the land of the Amazons, with a number of exciting and dangerous adventures on the way that left some of the crew dead or lost. After coming to the island of the war god Ares, where the heroes were attacked by Ares' birds, they finally reached Cholcis, where

the princess Medea, also a Hecate priestess, assisted them in escaping with the Golden Fleece. The return voyage is described differently in various versions, the most boring being that they sailed back the same way as they came. More imaginative sources have them journeying up the river Phasis all the way to Okeanus, the large body of water that surrounds the world, and then around to the Mediterranean; or via European riverways into the Baltic and through Gibraltar into the Mediterranean Sea. Apollodoros (Apollodorus, *The Library*, I. 9) has the ship suddenly reaching the Adriatic Sea and passing Eridanos (Po). The Argonauts relive some of Odysseus's and his men's adventures: visiting Circe on the island of Aeae west of Italy, coming by the island of the Sirens where they meet Scylla and Charybdis, and then travelling via the islands of Scheria and Korfu to Libya, making a detour to Lake Tritonis in the desert, and finally to Crete and back home. One important part of the tale seems to be an exciting but convoluted adventure story that impresses its reader with its long and involved journey, stressing the endeavours and the adventures of the heroes and the foreignness of the world of strange names and places outside the Greek cultural sphere, but at the same time linking them with the older story, that of the *Odyssey*. The voyage of Argos was something people had already tried to plot on the maps of physical reality in antiquity, as futile then as it is today.¹⁷

Ending the Tale

The experience of a landscape is fundamental not only in understanding the locations, sites, and roads placed in it, but also in understanding the ideas, thoughts, and feelings of the humans who live in the settlements, walk the paths and roads, climb the mountain slopes, cultivate the land, hunt and gather the resources, carry water, guard the flocks; those who see the trees and flowers, the traces of predators as well as the first swallow; those who hear the sounds of the wind in the trees, the cicadas, the bells on the sheep and goats and the songs of birds or the shrieks of those threatened by predators; those who smell the herbs, dry grass, and sheep folds. The ancient Greek landscape was also engendered: a topography where male river gods mated with female springs, the main winds were male, and the breezes were female. The space was divided by the male and female gods. The sky, the sea, and the underworld was given to male gods; the earth, with its processes of birth, growing, fading, and death, was given to a goddess,

¹⁷ Less well known is *Dionysiaca*, by Nonnus, end of the fourth or early fifth century CE. It is the epic tale of the god Dionysos's expedition to India and his return.



Figure 28. View from the temple of Apollo towards the lower sanctuary, Delphi, Greece.
Photo: Gullög Nordquist. Reproduced with permission.

Demeter. As pointed out by Cole (Cole 2004: 9–10), this divine conflict between male space and female processes became a template for differences between male and female realms of authority.

When people moved in the landscape they were surrounded not only by the reality of the physical world, but by the mythical and ritual landscape as well, that is, their mental landscape (Figure 28). Myths and stories were firmly related to mountains, trees, and rocks that also marked sacred and ritual places, ancestors and ancient heroes were present in their tombs and in the sites that marked their adventures in life, and these were stories that people knew and recognized, since through their communities they were part of a shared heritage.

The deeds of gods could be seen everywhere: in birds, trees, rivers, and stars that represented people or heroes whom the gods changed into non-human state. Around the people were also the divinities themselves, most commonly the nymphs, to be found everywhere in the landscape. Yet one could not be certain: perhaps when coming to the Arcadian border one might be met by Pan, or moving incautiously in the wild nature one might irritate a nymph or even stumble upon Artemis. Men were part of a manifold landscape and could not control it except through myths, rituals, and divinities.

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FROM TEMPLE TO CHURCH: THE REDEFINITION OF THE SACRED LANDSCAPE ON THE ACROPOLIS

Bente Kiilerich

A pioneering article on temple conversion was published in 1939 by Friedrich Wilhelm Deichmann. Here, the author listed eighty-nine temples that were converted into churches in the early Christian period.¹ As subsequent excavations have shown, the figure was probably at least twice as high. In the following pages, particular attention will be paid to problems associated with a specific site, Athens, and the fate of the architecture and sculpture of her two major temples, the Parthenon and the Erechtheion. Both were dedicated to the Virgin Athena and both were rededicated to the Virgin Mary.²

The Attitude towards Pagan Temples

The study of the conversion of temples into churches is fraught with historical, archaeological, philological, and religious problems.³ Early Christian atti-

¹ Deichmann 1939: 115–36. The areas surveyed are Syria and Palestine (thirty-two instances), Egypt and Nubia (twenty-three instances), Asia Minor and Constantinople (seventeen instances), Athens/Greece (five instances), Italy (seven instances), and North Africa (five instances). For some sites the evidence is quite scanty.

² I should very much like to thank the library and staff of l'École française d'Athènes for their generous hospitality in October 2007 and on many later occasions, which gave me as *lecteur* the opportunity to consult various publications and thus update and expand bibliographical references for the current study.

³ For discussions, bibliographies, and various views, see Spieser 1976; Fowden 1978;

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tudes towards pagan temples are complex and often ambivalent. Both written and material evidence indicate that no single parameter existed: in some places temples were left to crumble and decay, and often they fell, or had long since fallen, into ruin through lack of maintenance. At other locations temples were destroyed, often on the part of a zealous local bishop, who — at least from a modern point of view — may seem to have overreacted. At still other sites temples survived, if not as active places of worship, at least as architectural monuments. Following a period of deconsecration, which entailed removing the cult statue and the altar, some temples were turned into churches. The interval between temple and church function could be quite long: in Rome, for instance, the Pantheon was converted into a church as late as AD 609 (Sande 2003: 101–04).

Even though various laws from the mid-fourth century onwards were issued prohibiting sacrifice in the temples, anti-pagan laws were not universally enforced. The legislation concerning temples left room for diverse practical solutions. Moreover, laws were also issued prohibiting the destruction of ancient monuments, which were to be protected for their cultural value. It is specified, for instance, that although the emperor forbade sacrifices, he wanted to safeguard the decorations (*ornamenta*) of public buildings (Mommsen and others 2005, XVI. 10. 15, year 399, Ravenna). The general impression conveyed is that once a building ceased to function as a temple, the emperors were quite content to leave it as a monument; furthermore they wanted to prevent the illicit spoliation of material.

With regard to temples as materiel entities, the *modus operandi* varied considerably from place to place (Vaes 1986: 326–36; Milojevic 1997; Bayliss 2004; Saradi 2006: 355–72; Hahn, Emmel, and Gotter 2008). As for the archaeological evidence for mainland Greece, in Delphi, Olympia, and other sites, the transition from paganism to Christianity seems to have been gradual: Christianity implanted itself quite modestly in the ancient landscape (Foschia 2009: 210).

Athens: A General Overview

In addition to the Parthenon and the Erechtheion, the most important converted buildings in Athens are the following five: the Tetraconch in the Library of Hadrian, the Asklepieion and the Theatre of Dionysos, both on the south



Figure 29. The Tetraconch Building, Library of Hadrian, Athens.

Photo: Bente Küllerich. Reproduced with permission.

slope of the Acropolis, the Hephaisteion in the Agora, and the Ilissos temple, located outside the city walls.⁴

In search of the first church in Athens, some scholars (Karivieri 1994: 102–04; Gioles 2005: 41–42) have suggested that it is located in the highly problematic and hotly debated building known as the Tetraconch (Figure 29). However, this late antique structure in the peristyle court of Hadrian's Library presumably served a secular function, perhaps as a lecture hall.⁵ The rebuild-

⁴ The most recent overviews are Saradi 2011 and Gioles 2005, who relies especially on Pallas 1989. Baldini Lippolis states that at least twenty-eight churches are attested in Athens between the fourth and the seventh centuries, a number which is unsubstantiated archaeologically and rather high in view of the comparatively small Athenian population (Baldini Lippolis 1995: 181).

⁵ Kleinbauer has argued convincingly that this building phase was not ecclesiastical (Kleinbauer 1999); see Brenk 2001: 153–57 for a summary of the discussion and references. For the twelfth-century church on the site, see Bouras 2006. The partly reconstructed remains are

ing of the Tetraconch as a three-aisled basilical church with three conches (of smaller size than its secular predecessor) does not appear to have taken place before around the seventh century (Travlos 1971: 244). Here, as elsewhere, it was not a temple but a large secular building that was converted into a church.⁶

The temple-churches in Athens varied considerably with regard to size and plan. The church in the Asklepieion was a large three-aisled basilica (c. 74 x 31 m). The walls rested on and incorporated several ancient structures on the site: temple, altar, and part of a stoa.⁷ A much smaller, one-aisled church was erected in the precinct of the Theatre of Dionysos.⁸ The conversion of the Hephaisteion, the best-preserved Greek temple, required little rebuilding except for the addition of an apse and a reversal of the orientation whereby the entrance was moved from east to west. At some point in time the cella was barrel-vaulted, but the peristasis surrounding it remained unaffected.⁹ Similarly, the small, no-longer-extant temple by the Ilissos River, which became the Church of the Virgin at Petra, was adapted for its new function, but, as far as one can tell from later representations, the exterior was basically left intact.¹⁰ To a large extent, the exterior of the Christian buildings preserved the forms of their pagan predecessors. From the outside, a church could look conspicuously

extremely difficult to interpret. I am grateful to Hjalmar Torp for his observations and discussions in situ.

⁶ In Thessaloniki the archaeological evidence indicates that the earliest churches were erected on the remains of secular structures, such as baths, rather than temples. The earliest church at Thessaloniki was perhaps the Rotunda, the mausoleum/heroon of Galerius, built in the early fourth century and converted into a church by Theodosius c. 380/90; see Torp 1993; see also Vaes 1986: 313–26, for examples from other sites.

⁷ Xyngopoulos 1915; Travlos 1939–41: 63, c. 450–85; Travlos 1971: 128, late fifth–early sixth century; Karivieri 1995: 901, late fifth century. The Asklepieion is currently closed off to visitors.

⁸ Travlos 1953–54; Travlos 1960: fig. 86, p. 139, c. 450; Travlos 1971: 538, c. 500. Like the Asklepieion, this area is currently off limits.

⁹ Travlos 1960: 143, c. 450; Frantz 1965: 202–05, seventh century; Travlos 1971: fig. 335, p. 262, seventh century. The date of the barrel vault is uncertain, but likely to post-date the conversion by several centuries.

¹⁰ The Ilissos temple-church was demolished in 1778. In old engravings the church within the temple is clearly visible; see, for example, Stuart and Revett 1762: pl. I; Travlos 1971: 113, c. 450? This temple-church should not be confused with the three-aisled Ilissos basilica, built *ex novo* in honour of the martyr Leonidas further east by the Ilissos River (see Chatzidakis 1951). Some architectural elements and part of a mosaic pavement remain of this structure, which may date from the fifth century (Byzantine and Christian Museum, Athens). Some foundation blocks are still visible in situ (October 2007).

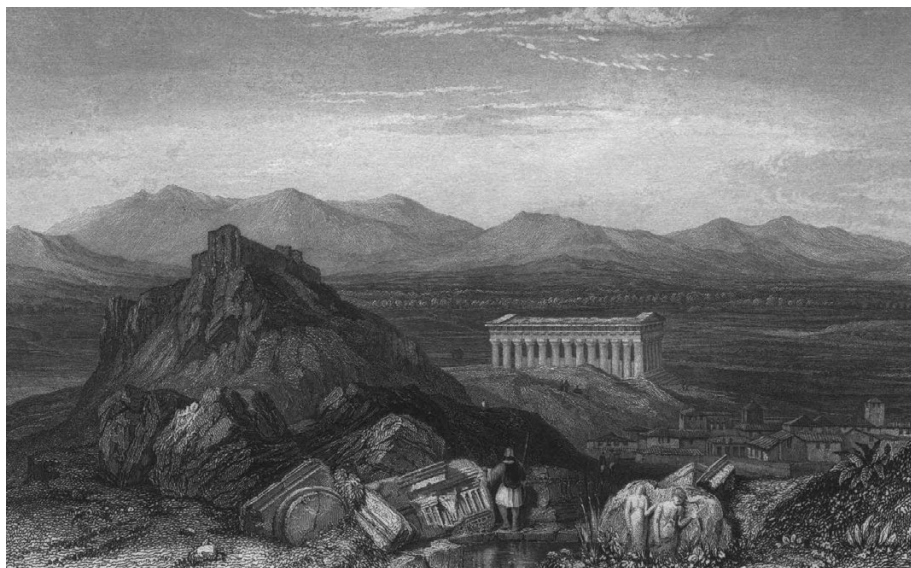


Figure 30. The Hephaisteion/Church of St George, Athens. Nineteenth century. Print in the author's collection. Reproduced with permission.

like a temple, as in the case of the Hephaisteion, which functioned as a church throughout Turkish rule (Figure 30).

Unfortunately, for each of these buildings the date of conversion is uncertain, and attempts to associate conversions with specific historical events are highly problematic. Since most of the archaeological evidence has been destroyed and there are no reliable written records of the transformation of individual temples, scholars have on various grounds proposed the fifth, sixth, and seventh centuries for one and the same Athenian conversion. On the belief that temples were unlikely to have been closed and unused for a considerable time, scholars formerly tended towards an early chronology, namely the years in the wake of the edict issued by Theodosius II in 435 ordering the destruction of all temples ('We command that all their fanes, temples, and shrines, if even now any remain entire, shall be destroyed by the command of the magistrates, and shall be purified by the erection of the sign of the venerable Christian religion': *Codex Theodosianus* XVI. 10. 25, Pharr 1969). However, more recent research suggests, if cautiously, that few, if any, Athenian temples were converted so early.¹¹ The present evidence indicates that the first churches

¹¹ In his early publications John Travlos dated the churches in the Asklepieion and the

in Athens were not converted temples but were newly built for their purpose. Moreover, these newly built churches, such as the basilica by the Ilissos River (Chatzidakis 1951), were placed outside the city wall, at the outskirts of the town rather than in the centre.

The Parthenon

The chronological problems of the conversion of Athenian temples into churches also apply to the main temples on the Acropolis: the Parthenon and the Erechtheion. To turn the Parthenon into a church the orientation was changed so that the entrance was from the west, the cella walls became the church walls, while an apse made of elements taken from earlier buildings was added in the east, projecting into the pronaos (Deichmann 1938–39; Korres 1994b: 145; Ousterhout 2005: 302–07) (Figure 31). Today, surviving traces of these features in situ consist of slight indications where once stood a column, and where the apse impinged upon columns at the east side of the pronaos.¹² Recent research confirms the existence of two building phases, an early Christian and a Byzantine, but unfortunately there are still many uncertainties with regard to the church (see Kaldellis 2009: 196–206).¹³

It is hardly surprising that the temple of Athena Parthenos, the Virgin Athena, became a church of the Virgin Mary, *Panagia Athenotissa*. However, it is surprising that no written evidence is preserved indicating when exactly this most famous of all the temples was turned into a church. Nor does archaeological evidence permit a conclusion. A written source, Marinus's *Life of Proclus* (Marinus of Samaria 1986: § 30), mentions the removal of the statue of Athena, implying that by 485 (the year when Proclus died) the building no longer functioned as a temple. Still, this does not necessarily imply that it functioned as a church. That the Parthenon might have become a church some time between

Dionysos theatre to around or shortly after 450 (see notes 7 and 8 above), but in 1971 he followed the late chronology suggested by Frantz 1965.

¹² Deichmann 1938–39 provides a level-headed discussion of the meagre evidence; Manolis Korres' investigations corroborate earlier findings; see Korres and Bouras 1983: 131–49; and Korres 1994b.

¹³ Korres and Bouras 1983: 131–49. This thorough study of 658 typewritten pages devotes less than forty pages (131–49, 151–67) to the Christian and later phases of the Parthenon. It should also be noted that in his report Korres relies heavily on very early sources, such as the drawing of the church apse made by the English architect G. Knowles in 1846 (Korres and Bouras 1983: 139). For a summary of results, see Korres 1994b; Korres 1994c: 176–77.

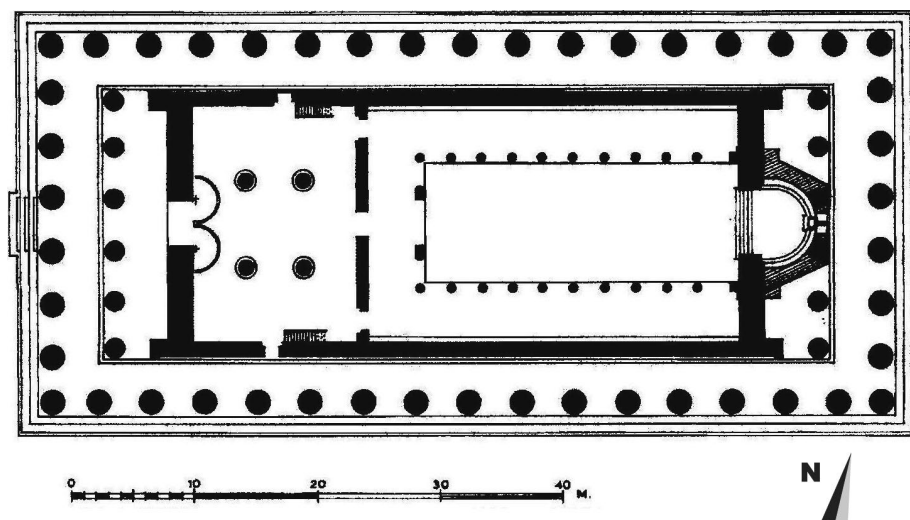


Figure 31. Groundplan of the church in the Parthenon, Athens.
Drawing by John Travlos 1968. Reproduced with permission.

450 and 500 has been argued by Cyril Mango (Mango 1995; Di Branco 2009). The hypothesis is based on the interpretation of a literary source, the so-called Tübingen Theosophy, a text that concerns a bogus miracle. It states that the temple of Apollo at Cyzikos was converted into a church by Emperor Leo (457–74) and mentions a temple in Athens that was likewise dedicated to the Virgin at this time. However, since it is uncertain whether the temple in question is the Parthenon, the evidence is feeble. Theoretically, the conversion could have taken place as early as the mid-fifth century, but it might also have occurred later. Manuel Korres states that the Parthenon was transformed into a church in the reign of Justinian (Korres 1994a: 49), but, as Robert Ousterhout notes: ‘There is, however, nothing to associate the conversion firmly with Justinian’ (Ousterhout 2005: 302). In fact, the only definite *terminus ante quem* is provided by a graffito, an invocation from the year 693, scratched on one of the temple columns (Orlandos and Vranoussis 1973: 21–22, no. 34). Two further inscriptions are of interest, since they give chronological hints: one dates from 550, 593, or 640, the other from 603 or 703 (Orlandos and Vranoussis 1973: pp. 66–67, no. 74; pp. 59–60, no. 68). Perhaps, at the very least we may take the year 640 as an *ante quem* for the conversion of the Parthenon.

From the early Christian church in the Parthenon, fragments of the ambo remain (Sklavou Mauroeide 1999, no. 393). The lower part of this pulpit,



Figure 32. Early Christian ambo slab from the Parthenon church, Athens, Byzantine and Christian Museum. Photo: Bente Kiilerich, 2007. Reproduced with permission.

made of non-figural classical spolia, supported a marble slab with a large cross (Figure 32) and others with a *chrismos*. The simple cross design is difficult to date with precision, for it could date from anywhere between the fifth and the seventh century.¹⁴ Four fragments of slightly curving sculpted elements have been tentatively associated with the Parthenon church, believed to have belonged to the epistyle of the interior of the apse (Sklavou Mauroeide 1999: no. 394 a–d) (Figure 33).¹⁵ Yet, while these pieces were formerly assigned to the Parthenon church, they are now more cautiously said to stem from a church on the Acropolis. Indeed, since the blocks in question are slightly awkward variations on the lotus-palmetto ornament of the Erechtheion, they are in my

¹⁴ Reconstruction drawing, Korres 1994b: fig. 14, p. 149; Sklavou Mauroeide 1999: 63, no. 74, with a fifth- to sixth-century dating.

¹⁵ Sklavou Mauroeide 1999: 42, no. 34, with a fifth-century dating. However, as for the ambo slab, the proposed date of the sculpture relies on the supposed date of the conversion of the Parthenon.



Figure 33. Early Christian ornament from the Acropolis, Athens, Byzantine and Christian Museum.
Photo: Bente Kiilerich. Reproduced with permission.

opinion more likely to derive from that church. Equally difficult to date with precision, these reliefs betray a conscious effort to recreate a classical aesthetic. The artistic approach is roughly comparable to, for instance, that of the ambo of Agnellus at Ravenna, dated to 557–70.

In the twelfth century, the *Panagia Athenotissa*, the Church of Our Lady of Athens, was rebuilt. An inscription on a fragmentary marble cornice refers to works carried out in the church (Sklavou Mauroeide 1999: no. 395, and no. 2492, T 13; Sklavou Mauroeide 1999: p. 178, no. 246). The building was provided with a new and larger apse with a mosaic of the Virgin. Unfortunately this mosaic no longer exists; it is known only from visitors' descriptions. The interior was also adorned with wall-paintings of which faint traces, painted directly on the marble blocks of the narthex (former opisthodomos), were visible in the twentieth century (Figure 34).¹⁶ The well-known metropolitan Michael Choniates held his inaugural speech in 1182 in the Parthenon, which was then the metropolitan church of Athens (Kiilerich 2005: 106–07). Michael has left a large correspondence in which he expresses his delight with the church and its furnishings, but utter disappointment with the town in general (Michael

¹⁶ Xyngopoulos 1920; Cutler 1993–94. As to date and commissioner, as Cutler puts it: 'We can neither date the wall paintings precisely nor identify them with a particular sponsor' (Cutler 1993–94: 172).



Figure 34. Remains of Byzantine paintings in the narthex (opisthodomos) of the Parthenon showing saints in medallions. Photo: Einar Dyggve, c. 1940; author's collection. Reproduced with permission.

Choniates 2001: 3–8). Compared to Constantinople, he found Athens hopelessly provincial and he searched in vain for the former grandeur of the ancient city and its monuments.

In the following period, when the town was under Latin rule, the Parthenon continued to serve as a church, only now a Catholic cathedral (Ousterhout 2005: 308–17). Then, during Ottoman rule, from c. 1460, the Acropolis became the stronghold of Ottoman Turks, and the Parthenon went through another major transformation as it was turned into a mosque.¹⁷ It is remarkable that through these various transformations the building retained much of its original sculptural decoration (Kiilerich 2008: 42–43).

¹⁷ I have elsewhere suggested that when the Parthenon was turned into a mosque, the *Panagia Athenotissa* may have taken refuge downtown in the Little Metropolis, the Church of the Panagia Gorgoepeikoos. This small church built of antique and medieval spolia provides another important and highly problematic example of Christian and pagan visual symbiosis; Kiilerich 2005: esp. 108–10.

The Parthenon Sculpture

What attitudes did Christians (and later Muslims) have towards the Parthenon sculpture? The Parthenon was densely packed with figural sculpture: both pediments, all external metopes, ninety-two in all, as well as a 160-metre-long frieze encircling the cella walls.¹⁸ The frieze, partly hidden behind the columns of the peristasis, and the pediments were largely kept intact. On the fronts and the northern flank, most metopes, however, appear to have been effaced, at times leaving little more than shadows of the figures. This disfiguration is often explained as a deliberate mutilation on the part of early Christians. On the southern flank, however, the centaur-metopes were left intact. This is generally put down to the fact that they attracted less notice, since the main thoroughfare across the hill was along the northern side.

In order to reconcile the presence of pagan themes in a Christian context, Gerhart Rodenwaldt suggested that a comparatively well-preserved metope with a standing and a seated goddess, at the north-west corner (N 32) could have been reinterpreted as a representation of the Annunciation (Rodenwaldt 1933; Figure 35). This proposition has been generally accepted. Since depictions of the angel Gabriel and the Virgin go back to around 400, it remains a possible, if perhaps not fully convincing, explanation. Also, both figures in question are headless, a state which in other metopes is taken as sign of wilful destruction.

The belief that early Christians wilfully destroyed the Parthenon sculpture has been fuelled in recent years. John Camp maintains that 'we can see the hands of Christians at work mutilating the sculpted metopes which stayed in place on the building' (Camp 2001: 238). Similarly Katherine Schwab thinks that 'most of the metopes sustained devastating damage by recently converted Christians who were eager to remove any vestige of pagan gods and goddesses from the former temple' (Schwab 2005: 165). Likewise Mary Beard finds that 'at the sacred east end, the scene of the birth of Athena would hardly have suited the new church and was promptly removed from the pediment' (Beard 2002: 55). Yet, in the west pediment above the entrance to the church, the sculptures — including a stark naked aggressively striding Poseidon — were allowed to remain.¹⁹ Since pagan subjects were tolerated over the entrance, they ought to have been acceptable also over the apse.

¹⁸ Most recently Cosmopoulos 2004; Neils 2005: with bibliography. Further, Kiilerich 2007: 121–30.

¹⁹ 'Auffallend ist es, dass der Westgiebel verschont geblieben ist' (Rodenwaldt 1933: 401).



Figure 35. North metope no. 32 from the Parthenon, so-called Annunciation.
Photo courtesy of the German Archaeological Institute, Athens. Reproduced with permission.

The most ardent proponent of the ‘Christian destruction theory’ is John Pollini, who in an article dealing particularly with the Parthenon frieze claims to have detected traces of hacking and bashing below the weathered surface of some heads on the east frieze. Yet he admits that due to weathering ‘this intentional damage [is] now wholly or partially concealed’ (Pollini 2007: 215). According to Pollini the mutilation of the sculpture could have taken place at various times: he proposes that workers fearing the gaze of ‘demons’ damaged the faces when frieze blocks were removed to make room for windows in the early Christian church (Pollini 2007: 220). He also suggests that the heads of

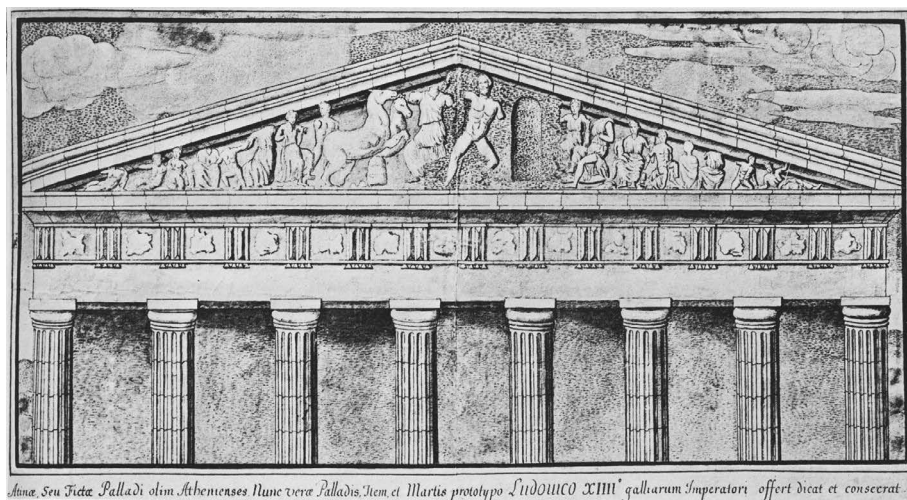


Figure 36. West pediment of the Parthenon, Athens.
Drawing by Jacques Carrey, 1674. Reproduced with permission.

the two figures on metope N 32 were attacked in the iconoclastic period (Pollini 2007: 216), whereas the central block of the east frieze is thought perhaps to have been disfigured when it was taken down in the twelfth century (Pollini 2007: 221). However, Pollini concedes that 'while in place on the Parthenon, the figures on the frieze would have been very difficult to see and therefore would not have provoked anxiety or caused offence' (Pollini 2007: 221–22).

Should the early Christians who accepted ancient sculptures as *ornamenta* (see Mommsen and others 2005: xvi. 10. 15) be blamed entirely for the mutilation of the Parthenon sculpture? Or did most destruction occur much later, for example when the church was turned into a mosque and on various other occasions? When the church was rebuilt in the twelfth century, some blocks of the eastern frieze had to be removed in order to make room for the larger apse. These frieze blocks were not destroyed but stored (and are now on display in the British Museum). As for the pediments, the drawings by the French artist Jacques Carrey show that as late as in 1674 most sculptures were in place in the west pediment (Figure 36), whereas drawings from 1802 reveal that by that time merely two figures were left.²⁰ Much damage was inflicted on the sculp-

²⁰ Bowie and Thimme 1971; Mallouchou-Tufano 1994: figs 21, 22, 27. Unfortunately the drawings of the Parthenon made by Cyriacus of Ancona in 1436 are of little use for establishing exactly what remained then; see Brown and Kleiner 1983; Mallouchou-Tufano 1994: figs 1–2.



Figure 37. Detail of west frieze from the Hephaisteion, showing two centaurs heaving a rock on their opponent, Athens, Greece. Photo: Bente Kiilerich, 2007. Reproduced with permission.

ture in the second Venetian-Turkish war, when the Parthenon was used to store gunpowder. This exploded in 1687, causing the destruction of the middle sections of the flanks. Further damage occurred around 1800 when Lord Elgin and various other agents had many of the marbles removed from the building. However, not all the damage and destruction is man-made: Exposure to the elements, storms, earthquakes, and other calamities inevitably have taken their toll. The centaurs on the southern side were protected from the rough northern winds, a fact which undoubtedly has contributed to their better state of preservation. In general, extremities like heads and hands, which on the metopes are carved almost free of the ground, would be the first to break off. On the frieze which was better protected due to its position most of the heads are still intact. In recent years, air pollution has done further damage, as a comparison of early and late photos bears out. In short, the early Christians' presumed eagerness to remove or destroy pagan imagery remains still to be proved.²¹

²¹ As suggested already by Michaelis in 1871, who found that the Parthenon metopes were



Figure 38. The Erechtheion and the foundations of the Archaic Temple of Athena Polias, Athens, Greece. Photo: Bente Kiilerich, 2007. Reproduced with permission.

A related case is provided by the Hephaisteion. In this temple sculpted decoration was restricted to the pediments, the metopes at the east end, and friezes over pronaos and opisthodomos (Koch 1955: 109–44). Sculpted with mythological subjects such as fighting centaurs (Figure 37) and featuring naked male bodies in combat, the reliefs were nonetheless allowed to remain when the temple became a church. Accordingly, although it is difficult to account for all damage to temple decoration, as far as Athens is concerned, the alleged Christian hostility towards ancient architectural sculpture is debateable. By the time these temples were converted into churches, pagan images were no longer felt to constitute a threat.

The Erechtheion

The Parthenon is the most famous monument on the Acropolis, indeed the most famous of all Greek temples. However, the most sacred spot on the sacred rock was not the Parthenon, but the area on the northern side with the ruins of the archaic Temple of Athena Polias (*Archaia naos*, Old Temple of Athena), and the so-called Erechtheion, also a temple of Athena, and its adjacent precincts of ancient cults (Kiilerich 1985: 4–71; Ferrari 2002). The sacred olive tree — Athena's winning contribution in the contest with Poseidon for the land

‘bequeme Zielpunkte für [...] jugendlichen und erwachsenen Buben mit Virtuosität betriebene Steinwerfen; denn eine systematische Zerstörung aus Fanatismus ist nicht eben Wahrscheinlich, da dann wohl auch die etwas abgelegene Südseite nicht so verschont geblieben wäre’ (Michaelis 1871: 66). See also Kaldellis 2009: 40–42.

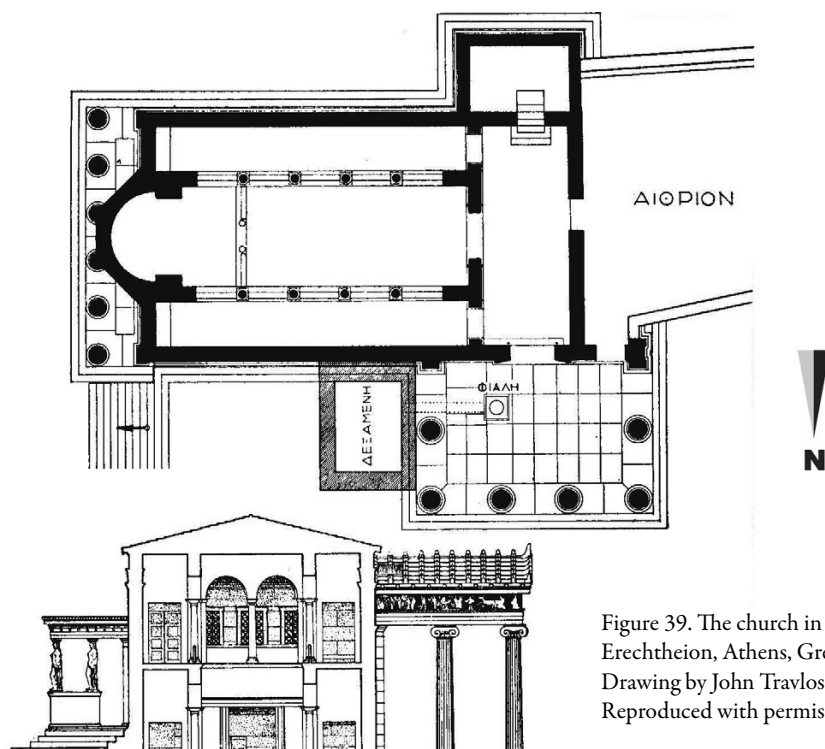


Figure 39. The church in the Erechtheion, Athens, Greece. Drawing by John Travlos, 1950. Reproduced with permission.

of Attica — grew in the Pandroseion, the temenos of Pandrosos at the western side of the temple (Figure 38). In this area were located the precinct and tomb of Pandrosos's father Kekrops, the first mythical King of Attica, earth-born and snake-tailed. Here were venerated mythical snake-legged figures such as Erechtheus and Erichthonios, the grandson of Kekrops, as well as Hephaistos and Poseidon. The rock showed the marks where the latter struck the ground with his trident and produced a salt spring. All these myths were associated with ancient fertility cults: Erichthonios was said to be born from Hephaistos's semen, which fell on the earth when Athena rejected him.²²

The date of the transformation of the Erechtheion into a church dedicated to the Virgin Mary is as uncertain and disputed as that of the Parthenon.²³ The inner partition walls were removed in order to make one large basilical hall,

²² For some of the myths connected with this part of the Acropolis, especially Kekrops and his daughters, see Küllerich 1989 with references; for topography and archaeology, see Hurwit 1999.

²³ For the Erechtheion church, see Paton 1927: 492–523.



Figure 40. Chancel slab in the Erechtheion, Athens, Greece.
Photo: Bente Kiilerich, 2008. Reproduced with permission.

while an apse built of sundry reused material was added in the east (Figure 39). In his contribution to the Erechtheion monograph, J. M. Paton reached the conclusion that the building methods were difficult to associate ‘with the age of Justinian even in a provincial city like Athens; they belong rather to the deep decline of the late sixth and seventh centuries’ (Paton 1927: 511). However, since he found it improbable that a temple remained so long untouched, Paton tentatively suggested a hypothetical first phase: ‘The building was first transformed into a simple church (or possibly a secular hall) with an undivided nave and perhaps an apse at the eastern end’ (Paton 1927: 522). At this point it is worth noting that the structure referred to as a ‘simple church’ may equally well have been a hall for secular use. John Travlos first proposed the early sixth century as a possible date for the conversion (Travlos 1960: 137), whereas Alison Frantz argued for the late sixth to seventh century (Frantz 1965: 202). Travlos subsequently accepted the seventh-century date (Travlos 1971: 214), while, more recently, Korres returned to the mid-sixth century (Korres 1994a: 49). This demonstrates the difficulties of ascertaining a secure chronology, for in point of fact there are hardly any archaeological criteria upon which to base a date for the conversion.

A single slab from the chancel screen is among the few sculpted pieces preserved (Figure 40). Precisely carved, the relief is of high quality. Some general parallels exist in other parts of Greece, but unfortunately this relief is difficult to date more precisely than sixth to seventh century: in other words it might

belong to the reign of Justinian, or it might be later.²⁴ Moreover the date of the conversion does not necessarily follow from the date of the screen, which could have been part of a later furnishing of the interior.

In general, the fame of the Acropolis and the strong pagan contingent in Athens might speak against an early conversion of the Erechtheion — and of the Parthenon — although the two temples were not necessarily converted at the same time. It is quite conceivable that the temples were left untouched for a long time. When Justinian closed the university in 529, the Acropolis may have been ‘Christianized’, although strangely — in view of the large amount of written sources from that emperor’s reign — no mention was made of it. Alternatively the transformation could have followed the Slavonic sacking of Athens in 582/83. This is compatible with Paton’s estimations of the archaeological traces in the Erechtheion, with the most likely date of the various sculpted fragments (chancel slab, curved architectural elements), and with the Parthenon graffiti (*terminus ante quem*: AD 640). The Slavonic raids could have given the impetus to establish churches on the more easily defensible hill.²⁵ Yet, so far, the question remains open.

The Erechtheion Sculpture: The Korai

The sculptured decoration of the Erechtheion consist of an external frieze of separately carved marble figures applied to a background of dark Eleusinian stone (Boulter 1970) and six sculptures in the round (Scholl 1995; Scholl 1998: 5–42). The most eye-catching feature is the latter, the six female figures which in the southern porch substitute columns (Figure 41). In contemporary inscriptions they are referred to as *korai*, girls or maidens, but they are commonly known as *karyatidai*, caryatids.²⁶ In many ways they are the visually defining feature of the

²⁴ For chancel screens, see Stoufe-Poulemenou 1999, esp. figs 126 and 134. As to sculptured decor, the above-mentioned lotus-palmetto reliefs, by some associated with the Parthenon, are of limited avail as it is uncertain to which building they belong. Similarly, parts of a large frieze with stylized lotus-palmetto and crosses, observed by the present writer outside the entrance to the Acropolis, and other fragments scattered nearby need to be put into their proper contexts. In addition there are the reliefs from the so-called Theseion Collection in the Hephaisteion, many of which came from the Acropolis. All these pieces warrant closer study.

²⁵ For the Slavonic attack and a discussion of the numismatic evidence, see Metcalf 1962.

²⁶ According to Vitruvius, caryatids represent the women of Karyia on the Peloponnese, who in the Persian war sided with the enemy; they were placed in architectural contexts to be punished in effigy as *exempla servitutis* (Vitruvius, *On Architecture*, I. 4. 8–5. 11; see Vickers



Figure 41. Modern copies of the caryatids in the Erechtheion, Akropolis, Athens.
Photo: Bente Kiilerich, 2005. Reproduced with permission.

Erechtheion. Since these large statues were not destroyed, but allowed to remain on the building when it was converted into a church, they cannot have been offensive to early Christian eyes. Therefore, the question is whether, when the temple became a church, these female figures were given a Christian meaning, or whether they were simply regarded as ornaments. Trying to answer this question, it must be recalled that it is uncertain what precise meaning they had when they were erected in 420/10 BC.

Since the maidens held libation bowls, they must be understood as priestesses. The *korai* carry the burden of the entablature on their heads. Female figures carrying objects on their heads bring to mind the Arrephoroi, two young priestesses whose ritual included that ‘something was placed on their heads’ (Pausanias, *Description of Greece*, I. 27. 3). In this ritual they re-enacted the myth of the daughters of Kekrops (Lauter 1976). According to legend, Athena

1985: 17–28). However, Vitruvius probably had other figures in mind than the Acropolis maidens, for whom the term caryatid is of a more recent date (see Plommer 1979: 101).

wanted to bring up the snake-tailed Erechthonios secretly, so she hid him in a basket and handed him over to the daughters of Kekrops. Two daughters had a peek and went mad, while the well-behaved Pandrosos did not look and was rewarded with a precinct, the Pandroseion, where the sacred olive grew, and where her father was buried. The funerary aspect of the girls who guard the tomb of King Kekrops is evident.²⁷ The *korai* had several connotations pertaining to the cluster of myths and rites intimately associated with this the most venerable and sacred part of the Acropolis, where cults had been present from time immemorial. Foremost among these connotations is the association with Kekrops and accordingly with mythical foundation.

Before addressing the question of how these sculptures might have been conceived by early Christians, it may be worthwhile to examine Roman reinterpretations. In Rome some fifty *korai*, to-scale replicas of the Erechtheion maidens, decorated the upper storey of the portici of Augustus's forum (Schmidt 1973: 7–19; Lesk 2007). The Forum of Augustus served various functions, but it was primarily the precinct of the temple of Mars Ultor; thus in spite of a layout and setting very different from that of the Erechtheion, the *korai* were part of a sacred urban landscape. This Roman visual quotation could be a mere cultural reference, a visual statement of the greatness of Athens now paralleled by the greatness of Rome. However, in view of the conscious politico-religious propaganda of Emperor Augustus, there was probably more to the imagery than this. In the portici, statues of the mythical founders of Rome — Romulus, Aeneas, and their descendants — were displayed. Mythical foundation, then, is a key concept linking Rome and Athens. In both places the *korai* are intimately connected with first kings and founders, stressing cult and continuity.

A century later, the very same *korai* were copied by Emperor Hadrian in his Villa Tiburtina at Tivoli (Scholl 1998: 60–64; Lesk 2007). There they were placed in a sacred landscape around the so-called Canopus, a scenic canal with a garden-bordered colonnade. At first sight this may seem a very different setting again from that of the Forum Augustum and the Erechtheion. However, the *korai* were definitely more than garden sculptures with merely a decorative function. The Canopus, named after a location in Alexandria, was a sacred landscape which included a Serapeum, probably devoted to the cult of Egyptian gods. Did Hadrian's *korai* chiefly refer to Rome or to Athens? In Augustus's forum the caryatids alternated with large shields with heads of Jupiter Ammon,

²⁷ Scholl interprets them as the Choephoroi, six young Athenian maidens who as ideal 'daughters' of Kekrops make sacrifices at his grave (Scholl 1995; Scholl 1998: 40).

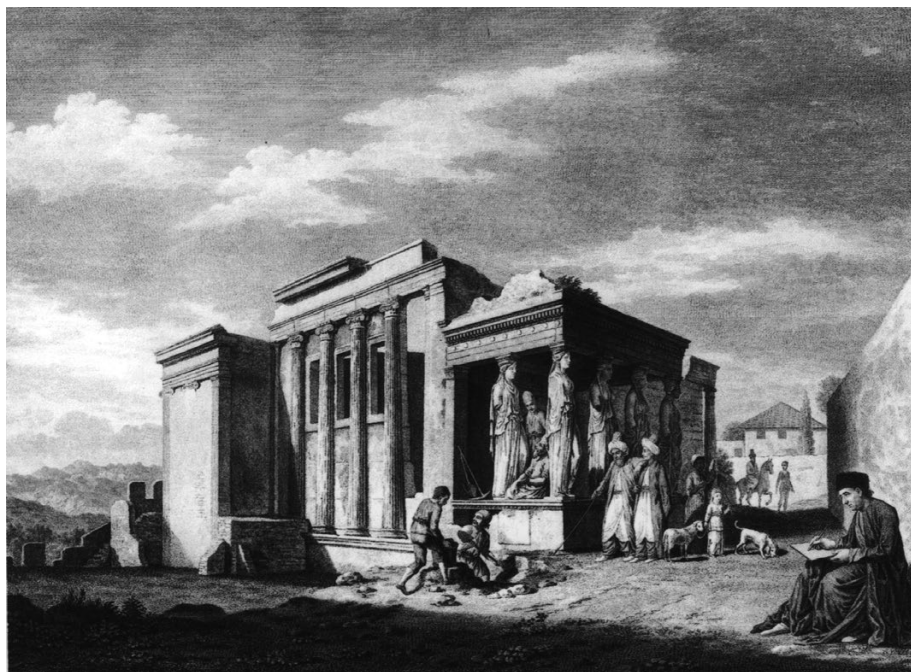


Figure 42. The Erechtheion serving as the residence of the Ottoman commandant. Engraving by James Stuart, 1787. Reproduced with permission from J. Stuart and N. Revett, *Antiquities of Athens*.

a Greek reference next to an Egyptian. At the Canopus, four maidens join forces with two Bes-Silenois thereby coupling Greek and Egyptian references in a similar fashion. The Silenois carry baskets with grapes and pomegranates on their heads, suggesting a cult of fertility. Mythical foundation is not directly implied, although Hadrian founded cities in Egypt. It has been proposed that the tomb of Hadrian's friend Antinoos was situated in close proximity to where the caryatids were found (Hannestad 1982: esp. 80–85). If such a reading of the archaeological evidence is correct, the strongest link between Hadrian's Villa Tiburtina and Athens is the funerary connotation.

The Roman quotations of the Erechtheion sculptures show that the *korai* are bearers of complex and shifting significations that related to the sacred in various ways. Since it is difficult to pinpoint their precise significance in their secondary as well as in their original context, their meaning to an early Christian viewer is even more difficult to establish. Had the female figures come to be seen only as ornamental anthropomorphic columns, or were they re-interpreted in a Christian sense? Since the Acropolis maidens were associated with a sacred

site and a grave, it should not have proved difficult for Christians to construct a myth about the *korai*, said originally to have guarded the tomb of Kekrops, as guardians of a holy person's grave. This was a site of miracles — the marks of Poseidon's trident and the ever-growing olive of Athena — and miracles were in keeping with Christian ideas. Accordingly, the early Christians may have created a pseudo-Christian mythology based on a reinterpretation of snippets of information about the ancient cults. Due to the lack of written sources, this, of course, remains as speculation.

The marble maidens continued to guard their porch on the Acropolis throughout its turbulent history.²⁸ In the Ottoman period, when the Parthenon served as a mosque, the Erechtheion had become the house of the commandant. The changing of the sacred landscape, once more, is recorded in coloured drawings and prints (Lesk 2005). By then, the female figures had largely a decorative function (Figure 42).²⁹

Conclusion

The Christianization of Athens consisted of a gradual embedding of new values into the ancient landscape. At first churches, such as the fifth-century Ilissos basilica, were built outside the town. Unfortunately there is no secure evidence for when the most important sanctuaries, the Parthenon and the Erechtheion, and others downtown, foremost the Hephaisteion, were converted into churches. It is totally possible that the temples on the Acropolis may have remained untouched until as late as around 600.

In the conversion of temples, architectural changes took place mainly in the interior, whereas the exterior was modified only slightly. In Athens as elsewhere, the early Christians took over antique forms. The acceptance of non-Christian visual expressions is also indicated by the fact that new architectural elements were carved with antique ornamental motifs. Consequently, throughout the Middle Ages and during the period of Turkish rule, the buildings on the Acropolis, in spite of the changing landscape surrounding them, retained much of their ancient character.

²⁸ For their later history, see Paton 1927: 523–36 (the Erechtheion as a Turkish house) and 536–60 (the Erechtheion as a ruin); Lesk 2005.

²⁹ Today the *korai* are replaced by copies. One was brought to London as part of the Elgin marbles; the rest are now in the New Acropolis Museum.

A particularly interesting aspect of conversion is the early Christian attitude towards architectural figural sculpture. Whether the Erechtheion *korai* were appreciated for their aesthetic value or given a Christian meaning, they remained a defining feature of the sacred landscape on the Acropolis for two and a half millennia. Similarly, most of the Parthenon sculpture was retained on the building when it became a church, there being little evidence of systematic destruction of the imagery by early Christians. While certain metopes may have been given a *reinterpretatio christiana*, each and every piece of mythological sculpture could hardly have been perceived in a Christian light: in particular, the stark naked Poseidon in the pediment over the entrance to the church strikes a very 'un-Christian' note. Yet, few apparently took offence at this visual manifestation, which could still be seen as late as 1674. It may therefore be concluded that the alleged hostility towards the pagan content of temple sculpture has been exaggerated. By the time the temples on the Acropolis were converted, pagan imagery no longer presented a threat.

While the taking over of a temple, as stressed by Friedrich Deichmann in 1939, at times had a triumphal aspect, the impetus for conversion seems often to have been practical. Regrettably the churches on the Acropolis remain only as spectres, since the reconstructed architectural landscape evokes the Virgin Athena at the expense of the Virgin Mary.

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CRUSADING AND CHRISTIAN PENETRATION INTO THE LANDSCAPE: THE NEW JERUSALEM IN THE DESERT AFTER *c.* 1100

Kurt Villads Jensen

Crusading and Christian mission were closely connected during the Middle Ages, but in an indirect way. The primary aim of the soldiers on the military expeditions after 1100 was to secure peace for missionaries so that they could spread the Word; it was not the aim of the Crusades to convert people directly, but to prepare the landscape and its inhabitants for conversion.¹

Within the Christian world, the connection between warfare and mission is an old one and goes back to at least the fourth century.² Several debates centre on whether or not Christianity was ever truly and totally a pacifistic religion, and since Augustine, the most prominent theologians have argued that it was not. However, the Crusades from around 1100 onwards represented a qualitatively different form of religious warfare compared to earlier times, because of a new focus upon Jerusalem. During the Carolingian and Ottonian peri-

¹ For discussions about sacralization and landscapes, see Tuan 1974; Tuan 1995; Hanawalt and Kobialka 2000. On creating, changing, and transmitting remembrance or history through ritualized behaviour, see Connerton 1989; Schechner 1994; Schechner 2002. Warm thanks to Kirsi L. Salonen for helpful comments and suggestions for this article.

² Russell 1975: 10–15; for a recent discussion of the crusades and the background of just war theory, see Tyerman 2006.

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ods, the first aim of religious warfare had been to secure peace in countries and the second was to convert (and conquer) the nearest neighbours. In that sense, Christianity spread and grew, but always by bringing the nearest heathens into the flock.

From 1099 onwards, religious wars began to take an entirely different path, embarking on Crusades to Jerusalem with the aim of liberating the Holy Sepulchre. This had been facilitated by a markedly growing interest in Jerusalem during the eleventh century, an interest which was reinforced greatly after the crusaders took actual possession of the city. Jerusalem became the centre for Latin Christians, but at the same time the centre became distributed to the periphery, both in the form of physical relics and as an ideal. Jerusalem became the focal point through which all ideas about religious wars from then on were to be seen.³

The aim of this article is to discuss what Christianity meant for the shaping of the landscape and how this influence was transmitted to new areas by crusading. A necessary consideration in this discussion is the question of how medieval man conceived of the landscape. Sources are few and scattered, especially from Scandinavia, and very often only small glimpses of the medieval sense of the landscape can be seen. Most is simply not recorded, and even less has been explained or contextualized by contemporaries. To achieve a more complete picture, a degree of speculation must be introduced into the discussion, based on methodologically sound constructions and probable deductions from other evidence (not necessarily reflected directly in any specific source). This is, to some extent, a question of discerning whether things happened or not, but it is even more a question of understanding or sensing the impact that certain events and phenomena had upon medieval man, who in many respects lived in surroundings very different from today.

Our present landscapes have been cultivated for another thousand years since the time of the Crusades: they are fragmented into small and privately owned plots of land, bound together with modern technological means of communication from roads to the sounds of mobile phones. To imagine a medieval landscape is a difficult challenge to us both because of a lack of sources and because of this difference in background.

In the Middle Ages, landscapes were perceived through the senses, and to change a landscape meant to appeal to additional senses thus far not utilized in

³ Works on the influence of the idea of Jerusalem are abundant; for important introductions, see Riley-Smith 1986 and McGinn 1978.

this respect, or to appeal to them in a new way. The change could be in *sound* and in *visual representation*, and there could probably also be changes in smell and taste, but few sources remain to document the latter two.

All of these three impressions could be changed between being and not being, for example between sound or silence. However, all of them could also be presented with different connotations, or be coloured in order to create different associations: sounds, sights, and smells that can be perceived as light or dark, good or bad.

A different aspect of the way landscape is conceived — in its totality instead of looking at separate impressions or senses — is the question of whether it is perceived as being *open or closed*. In other words, is man a part of the landscape or not, and is he afraid of it or not?

A fundamental issue for the whole discussion of the sacralization of the landscape is the question of *transferability*, that is, to what extent the landscape can influence and govern the life and thought of individuals, and how much one can free oneself from the landscape. It is the difference between a holistic world view that includes nature and a compartmentalized world view where the different categories do not necessarily influence each other. These last two aspects — the questions of an open or closed landscape and of its transferability — create the necessary framework for all the concrete observations that will follow here, but they will themselves only be touched upon briefly in the conclusion.

Sound of War, Sound of Heavenly Peace

Fundamentally, there were two ways to conduct missions in the Middle Ages. The first was to convert important individuals of the local elite, who would then impose their new faith upon the population, often based on military arguments. The other way was by military conquest. In both cases, conversion normally began with warfare.⁴

The beginning of war brought about the first phase in the reshaping of the landscape. It became noisy, as is recorded in a great number of medieval descriptions of warfare and crusading — normally written by Christian conquerors

⁴ Which does not exclude the possibility that a pagan population could have substantial knowledge of Christianity from contacts with Christian areas, and a process of conversion from below could have also begun with peaceful missionaries. Yet the decisive point in mass conversion seems to have been reached most often through war. For general discussions of conversion in Northern Europe, see Wood 2001: 3–24; and Carver 2003: 2–12.

and not their enemies. From their descriptions, it is clear that the sounds of weapons and marching men could have been heard from far away. When a foreign army approached, shouting began and the music of horns and drums could be heard, as recorded for example in one of the great Baltic crusading narratives from the early thirteenth century:

They went down the mountain in the morning and saw the castle and the army of the pagans and the valley separating them. And immediately they struck the drums of joy and all the musical instruments and began to sing to exhilarate the men's spirit and they prayed God for mercy for themselves and they attacked swiftly the pagans.⁵

At night, during sieges and before decisive battles, the soldiers would sing in the darkness around the camp fires. They would bang their swords against their shields, and would play music with different regional instruments, depending upon the soldiers' origins.⁶ The local population may have been warned beforehand by watch fires, or by the guards at the many watchtowers, especially along the coast line, but the first real important change to the landscape was the sound of battle. Today, with modern society's abundance of artificial noise, the position is difficult to imagine, but in a medieval society where the silence sometimes must have been overwhelming, the noise of weapons and an army could be heard from far away.

The noise itself had its peculiar colour. Normally it was dark and followed by bad omens of approaching death. Clouds of ravens crying hoarsely followed the marching soldiers and flew slowly just above the spearheads, waiting to be fed.⁷ The marching of the soldiers made the earth tremble with a deep sound like an

⁵ For detailed descriptions of medieval crusading penetration into the landscape from the mid-1220s, see Henry of Livonia 1955. In chap. xv. 3, there is a description of a battle from 1211: 'Et ibant pedites caute et ordinate et mane facto descendentes de monte vident castrum et exercitum paganorum, et vallis erat inter eos. Et statim percusso tympano leticie cum instrumentis musicis et cantu suo virorum animos exhilarantes Deique clemenciam super se invocantes festinanter ad paganos accelerant et transito rivulo ad colligendum se in unum modicum subsistent.'

⁶ 'Nulla requies conceditur fessis, diebus pugnant, noctibus ludos et clamores exercent. Lyvones cum Lettis concussione gladiatorum cum clypeis conclamantes, Theuthonici in tympanis et fistulis et ceteris instrumentis musicis, Rutheni cum suis instrumentis et clamoribus noctes omnes insomnes ducunt': Henry of Livonia 1955, xxviii. 5, describing a battle in 1224.

⁷ Saxo Grammaticus 2005, xiv. 19. 13 about the final and decisive battle between the two royal claimants to the Danish throne, Valdemar and Svend, in 1153: 'Illud quoque memoratu dignum, quod Waldemari exercitum tam crebri corvorum greges intervolasse produntur, ut complures se erectis militum hastis feriendos obicerent.'

earthquake.⁸ The land was laid barren by the army, which devoured everything and was like a swarm of locusts, one of the ten plagues of Egypt.⁹ Additionally, the crusader armies were followed regularly by storm and thunder and unusual stars or comets in the sky. This rage of nature, which is well attested in most of the general crusading narratives of the twelfth century, reflects an attempt to make the landscape sacred, as a battleground between Christians and pagans, between God and pagan demons, between good and evil (see Riley-Smith 1986: 10–11 and *passim*).

From the crusaders' perspective, the battle could resound with light and shining noise. During the dire siege at Antioch (1097–98), the sky opened, and an army of white knights came riding out of heaven with, we must assume, all the noise of an attacking cavalry. These were crusaders who had died on the march and now came back to fight together with the living (Morris 1983; Holdsworth 1996). This is the first recorded instance of a knightly army from heaven, but it became a very common theme in records which were written during the subsequent crusades of the twelfth century and later. On the Iberian Peninsula, these armies were often led by one of the crusader saints, Santiago or Isidor. In the Baltic, they were dispatched by the Virgin Mary. Sometimes white heavenly knights were fighting against black spirits or demons produced by pagan or Muslim sorcerers. Often they were shining like the sun so they actually blinded the pagans and secured victory for the crusaders.¹⁰ They were 'the souls of those who were slain for the word of God. [...] These are they which came out of great tribulation, and have washed their robes, and made them white in the blood of the Lamb' (Revelation 6. 9; 7. 14). However, the bright sound could also stem from things other than heavenly warhorses. Sometimes crusaders heard choirs of angels receiving the souls of their dead comrades. Heaven opened to welcome the martyrs, and sometimes church bells were heard in the sky, as happened during the largest war ever recorded in Danish history before the Crusades proper, at the battle at Lyrskov Moor against the pagan Wends in 1042. The Christian soldiers led by King Magnus heard clearly the sound of the great bell from Trondheim Cathedral, where King Magnus's martyr father Olav lay buried.¹¹

⁸ Albert of Aachen 1879, iv. 300–713 (here lb. i, chaps 5–6), describing the marching armies of the First Crusade in 1096/97: 'terraemotus [...] quam ex regno Franciae quam Lotharingiae terrae, teutonicorum simul et anglorum et ex regione danorum'.

⁹ Guibert de Nogent 1996, i. 1, also describing the First Crusade.

¹⁰ As in the battle for Alcácer do Sal in Portugal 1217, described in Gosuino 1856, and in letters to Pope Honorius III; see also Mansilla 1965: no. 95.

¹¹ Snorri Sturluson 1951: 3–67, chaps 27–28.

All sieges and battles ended first in the cacophonous sound of the pagans crying and lamenting their dead — a pleasing sound to the Christian crusaders, it is stressed in most narratives — and ultimately harmony was restored by the Christians walking in processions whilst singing *Te Deum* and giving thanks to God for the victory. A missionary war or a crusade was a noisy affair, and it opened the landscape to heaven. It turned the land into a sacred battlefield, the place for a divine ordeal.

After the Christian victory, the sound of Christianity took possession of the landscape through the church bells, which seem to have been one of the first things to be installed. They could be heard miles away in the flat and open landscapes as in southern Scandinavia, and in mountainous regions the sound of a small bell could fill a whole valley. It is characteristic of religiously mixed border areas that the first thing to be regulated was the use of church bells or the muezzin's call to prayer from the minarets. Controlling the sound of the landscape was the first and most important step in reshaping it in the image of one's own religion. Next came influences upon more intimate circles, where individuals were transformed by being accepted as members of sound-communities, by listening to the same liturgical readings and songs and by joining in the same prayers.

The liturgical song distinguished Christianity as something different to the pagan world, but it drew on a tradition and a sense of beauty that was older and not restricted to Christians alone. The song was indispensable in the divine service, but it was also often feared, lest it become a goal in itself, admired for its beauty and not for conveying a better understanding of the Word. After his personal conversion, Saint Augustine had wept over the singing in the church, although later he was moved not by the song, but by its content or message. He acknowledged the effectiveness of well-modulated, soft song and would not speak against it, because it still had its purpose in the teaching of Christians: 'Thus, I oscillate between the danger of pleasure and an attempt to acquire a sense of salvation.'¹² Almost nine hundred years later, Thomas Aquinas referred to Augustine when he, after a discussion *pro et contra* the use of singing in the churches, concluded: 'Hence the use of music in divine praise is a salutary institution, that the souls of the faint-hearted may be the more incited to devotion' (Thomas Aquinas 1948, II, II, q. 91, art. 2).

¹² Augustine 1837, x. 33: 'Verum tamen cum reminiscor lacrimas meas, quas fudi ad cantus ecclesiae tuae in primordiis recuperatae fidei meae, et nunc ipso quod moveor non cantu, sed rebus, quae cantantur, cum liquida voce et convenientissima modulatione cantantur, magnam instituti huius utilitatem rursus agnosco. Ita fluctuo inter periculum voluptatis et experimentum salubritatis.'

The sound of Christian communities comprises two elements. One is very personal and unites each individual with their fellow believer standing beside them, whose words he or she can actually hear. The other is soundless sound, or rather inner knowledge that at the same time Christians in all countries over the whole world are united in listening to the same texts and praying the same prayer. The others can not be heard physically, but believers nonetheless enter into a real and existing sound-community with them. This sound-community even transgresses this world, because music is ultimately an echo or reflection of the divinely ordered celestial spheres, the abstract music of universal order. The song of every Christian congregation is a dim reflection of the praise of the 144,000 just who stand in white robes before the throne of the Lamb (Revelation 7. 14). Thus, with the Christian understanding of music and harmony, the local landscape was intimately linked to the world in its entirety and became part of the Christian God's divine plan: 'The whole universe is ordered like a cithara, in which there is a consonance of different kinds of things, like chords', wrote Honorius Augustodunensis in the first half of the twelfth century. Angels and humans are like spirit and body, or like a choir with men and boys where the deep and the high voices go together in consonance — they differ in figure, but they are united in essence, namely in their desire to seek the good.¹³

Visual Representation

The next step immediately after a crusade conquest was to cleanse the lands of the new mission, washing away evil to sacralize the landscape. Of primary importance was the destruction of idols, which were physical representations of pagan gods. It was so obvious to medieval men that pagans had idols that crusaders found them everywhere, including places where they clearly could never have existed. It became widely accepted, and believed, that before the First Crusade in 1099, the Muslims had revered a silver idol of Muhammad in the Dome of the Rock mosque in the Temple Square in Jerusalem. This belief was noted in contemporary narratives and repeated throughout the Middle Ages.

¹³ Honorius Augustodunensis 1895a, col. 1179: 'Ad quid fecit coelum? Ut habitatio esset angelorum. Ad quid terram? Ut esset habitatio hominum. Summus namque opifex universitatem quasi magnam citharam condidit, in qua veluti varias chordas ad multiplices sonos reddendos posuit: dum universum suum opus in duo, vel duo sibi contraria distinxit. Spiritus enim et corpus quasi virilis et puerilis chorus gravem et acutum sonum reddunt, dum in natura disentiunt, in essentia boni conveniunt.'

Although a number of the first crusaders claim to have seen it themselves,¹⁴ it is simply impossible that Muslims ever had any kind of religious statue in one of their most sacred mosques.

In the north, idols were wooden statues and were not only destroyed, but also desecrated. After the conquest of the pagan fortress and temple of Arkona on Rügen in 1168, crusaders tilted the statue of the pagan god Svantevit, dragged it outside, and cut it into small pieces that were used for the evenings' fires to cook the soldiers' soup (Saxo Grammaticus 2005, XIV. 39. 34). A more thorough humiliation of an idol is difficult to imagine. With the destruction of idols also came the destruction of temples that were burned or destroyed, so that timber could not be used for new buildings or be revered as sacred objects in themselves. In the south, the more solidly built mosques were purified with prayers and holy water and reconsecrated as churches.

Holy trees were a particular problem faced by missionaries in many of the northern pagan areas that were converted during the crusades. Missionaries were aware of the great significance of these trees, and if they had the military assistance to enforce it, they took care to have them cut down. Sometimes the timber was used in the building of new churches. This is in one sense a kind of cult continuation or cult incorporation that perhaps made it easier for the newly converted pagans to accept Christianity. On the other hand, it was also a manifestation of Christian victory and triumph — the new faith had conquered, replaced, and encapsulated the old pagan faith. Similarly, the timbers from the trebuchets and siege towers were reused sometimes for the new churches; a practical solution but also a permanent memento that the new faith should not be negotiated but accepted (Saxo Grammaticus 2005, XIV. 39. 34). If the missionaries did not have the physical force to back them up, they would often have to accept that the pagans would convert, build churches, and perform the right rituals, but they would not cut down the trees (Otto of Bamberg 1999: 132 and *passim*). In both cases, the missionaries had to accept that many trees remained, which were perhaps not the old centres for the pagan cult, but were still revered and represented a continuation of the old faith. This is probably the reason why so many old oak trees in the Wendic areas in the Western Baltic were mentioned in donation charters of the twelfth and thirteenth centuries. They were known to the local population and could be used to describe the landscape, but they were also serious enough to mark and Christianize.

¹⁴ Both Rainer C. Schwinges and John V. Tolan discuss how the idea of Muslim idolatry may have been inspired by the traditions of pagan idolatry known from the earliest church, as an attempt to fit Muslims into known categories of pagans (Schwinges 1977: 119–41; Tolan 1999).

From donation charters to Cistercian monasteries we know that crosses were carved into these old trees — they had been converted themselves, but they also stood as solid witnesses to the fact that the whole landscape was now controlled by crusaders and the new faith.¹⁵

The next step to ensure the continuation of the new cult of Christianity was the erection of churches that followed immediately after the conquest. They were obviously a very visible sign of Christianity, but they changed very much over time, from the compact Romanesque to the later and much more open Gothic style. The very early churches were wooden, and they somehow fitted into the forest. This changed with the Romanesque churches in stone, which were erected in their hundreds in the North after 1100. Both on the flat land and in the mountains, they must have represented a solid presence that clearly distinguished it from the landscape, built to last for eternity. Inside, the building was light with the windows carefully placed in the apses, so that the sun would shine in and illuminate the altar and the crucifix on the altar during Mass. The idea behind the church building must have been to create a new and sacred area, which was filled inside with the light that reflected the divine and enlightened and eradicated paganism:¹⁶ ‘The people that walked in darkness have seen a great light: they that dwell in the land of the shadow of death, upon them hath the light shined’ (Isaiah 9. 2). The whole universe was created by God as a point of light in formless and dimensionless matter, and from that point the light expanded and was incorporated with matter, so corporeal motion is a multiplicative power of light.¹⁷ Landscape and physical form and matter are created by and sacralized by divine light: ‘God is light, and the light shineth in darkness, and the darkness comprehended it not’ (John 1. 5).

¹⁵ For example, the donation charter of 1172 to Dargun in Mecklenburg-Vorpommern, in *Mecklenburgisches Urkundenbuch*, 1, 111.

¹⁶ For churches and light, see Duby 1981, especially the chapter ‘Dieu est lumière, 1130–1190’ (pp. 121–62); and Eco 1986, chap. 4, ‘The Aesthetics of Light’ (pp. 43–51).

¹⁷ ‘Dico enim, quod forma prima corporalis est primum motivum corporale. Illa autem est lux, quae cum se multiplicat et expandit absque hoc, quod corpulentiam materiae secum moveat, eius pertransitio per diaphanum fit subito et non est motus, sed mutatio. Quando vero est lux expandens se in partes diversas, ista incorporatur materiae, si corpulentiam materiae secum extendit, et fit rarefactio materiae vel augmentum’: Grosseteste 1912a: 51–59; and Grosseteste 1912b: 90–92. For these works, see McEvoy 1983. Grosseteste’s ideas are actually very close to those of Alpher and Herman who in 1948 argued that the early phase of the universe was dominated by radiation rather than matter; one of the important steps towards the formulation of the modern big-bang theory; see Kragh 2006.

The ornaments in the churches were also employed to create and, indeed, to enhance the light that was reflected into the church. In the Middle Ages, jewels were not ground into polygonal shapes and, as a consequence, reflected light in a different way. They appeared as if they were glowing from inside (Duby 1981: 126–30). This is impossible to see with modern electric light, but has an astonishing effect when illuminated by candlelight. Moreover, liturgical gowns of the priests were made of bright colours and were so important that the donation of liturgical clothes was often mentioned specifically as one of the benefactions of church builders.¹⁸ Mural paintings also created a new and very different light that was specifically Christian. The deep-blue and gold figures in many of the frescoes that date to the twelfth century are clearly inspired by contemporary Byzantine art.¹⁹

The interpretation of the liturgy changed around 1100, compared by theologians to the classical Roman theatre. Just as the actors in antiquity had shown who they represented through gestures, the celebrant should imitate Christ in his actions. As Honorius Augustodunensis wrote in 1100, ‘He shows the agony of Christ to the Christian people in the theatre of the church’.

The priest spreads out his arms to imitate Christ hanging on the cross; he is silent while preparing the communion to signify how Christ like a voiceless lamb was being led to be sacrificed. He sings and imitates the cry of Christ hanging on the cross. And after the sacrament he gives peace to the people, who can then return to their own with joy when they are told so by the words ‘*Ite missa est*’.²⁰

¹⁸ For example, for more on Knud Lavard and the churches he founded during his crusades among the Wendic Abodrites in the 1120s, see *Vitae sanctorum Danorum*: 236–37.

¹⁹ These frescos have been badly preserved, but enough have been left from southern Scandinavia to show that they were common and that the connections to Byzantium had been strong.

²⁰ Honorius Augustodunensis 1895b, i. 83, col. 570: ‘Sciendum quod hi qui tragoedias in theatri recitabant, actus pugnantium gestibus populo repraesentabant. Sic tragicus noster pugnam Christi populo Christiano in theatro Ecclesiae gestibus suis repraesentat, eique victoriam redemptionis suae inculcat. Itaque cum presbyter Orate dicit, Christum pro nobis in agonia positum exprimit, cum apostolos orare monuit. Per secretum silentium, significat Christum velut agnum sine voce ad victimam ductum. Per manuum expansionem, designat Christi in cruce extensionem. Per cantum praefationis, exprimit clamorem Christi in cruce pendentis. Decem namque psalmos, scilicet a Deus meus respice usque In manus tuas commendo spiritum meum cantavit, et sic expiravit. Per Canonis secretum innuit Sabbati silentium. Per pacem, et communicationem designat pacem datam post Christi resurrectionem et gaudii communicationem. Confecto sacramento, pax et communio populo a sacerdote datur, quia accusatore nostro ab agonotheta nostro per duellum prostrato, pax a iudice populo denuntiatur, ad convivium

The liturgy in the churches became a re-enactment of the biblical message that also included the biblical surroundings, and it therefore meant that the foreign landscape of the Bible with all its persons was now introduced into the missionary areas.²¹ Christian dogma and biblical history were also taught to the newly converted by means of dramatic theatres outside the consecrated bounds of a church. Often this occurred with realistic scenes and interpreters — sometimes it became too realistic, as in 1205 when the pagan and newly baptized Livonians fled, terribly frightened because they believed that Gideon and the old Israelites on the scene were the crusaders returning to resume the fight against them (Henry of Livonia 1955: IX. 14).

To other theologians, the performative aspect in churches went much too far. Gerhoh of Reichersberg criticized priests for turning churches into theatres, which became the centres for spectacles and plays, where good Christians jumped around with masks and acted as Herod or the Antichrist. Many found these figures amusing rather than disgusting or frightening, and they were encouraged in their sinful impulses. Aelred of Rivaux complained about the exaggerated manner in which singers and actors expressed themselves in churches, when they imitated the agonies of the dying and the terror of those enduring eternal torment. They twisted their lips, rolled their eyes, heaved the shoulders, and the Christian congregation was distracted from the sacred content of the liturgy.²²

In larger churches and monasteries, carved statues and painted figures were put up inside, and the outside of the building could be adorned with strange figures. Gargoyles climbed stone churches, and dragons wormed their way around the wooden churches of the north. On the Danish Hørning church, a long, thin, Viking-style snake can be found on an external board just below the roof, while on the Norwegian stave churches dragons' heads protrude from high up in the dark timber. If they are representations of old demons and pagan powers, they illustrate how the old religion in its own landscape attacked the new sacred buildings, but had been caught and fossilized by Christianity. If they represented all of the many creatures which, in spite of their deformity, still have a human soul and can be saved by clinging to the church,²³ then they

invitatur. Deinde ad propria redire cum gaudio per Ite missa est imperatur. Qui gratias Deo jubilat et gaudens domum remeant.

²¹ In general, see also Hardison 1965.

²² Cited from Dox 2004.

²³ The suggestion is made by Claude Kappler in his discussion of the role of monsters in medieval art and especially on churches (Kappler 1980: 219–20).

turned the church building into an asylum, a refuge to which the lame and maimed could flee and escape the harsh condemnations of pagan society.²⁴

Not everyone thought that statues and figures helped to create the right type of devotion and open the soul to the Word of God, but quite the opposite. Bernard of Clairvaux wrote:

In the cloisters meanwhile, why do the studious monks have to face such ridiculous monstrosities? What is the point of this deformed beauty, this elegant deformity? Those loutish apes? The savage lions? The monstrous centaurs? The half-men? The spotted tigers? The soldiers fighting? The hunters sounding their horns? You can see a head with many bodies, or a body with many heads. Here we espy an animal with a serpent's tail, there a fish with an animal's head. There we have a beast which is a horse in front and a she-goat behind; and here a horned animal follows with hind-quarters like a horse. In short there is such a wondrous diversity of figures, such ubiquitous variety, that there is more reading matter available in marble than in books, and one could spend the whole day marvelling at one such representation rather than in meditating on the law of God. In the name of God! If we are not ashamed at its foolishness, why at least are we not angry at the expense?²⁵

Smell and Taste

The smell of a church must have been different to that of a pagan temple. To what extent incense had been used in earlier periods is very difficult to say. Nevertheless, there was, at least, a major difference: Christian churches were used as burial places; pagan temples were not. Relics of saints were also kept in churches, but not in pagan temples. Thus, there must have been a peculiar smell of bone and dust. It is also possible to imagine a new taste of Christianity in the sense that wine had become an indispensable part of the Communion. Until

²⁴ We do not know for sure if pagan societies in general were less tolerant towards the disabled. It is a general assumption in many historical investigations, but it may perhaps simply reflect the early Christian polemics against unbelievers.

²⁵ Bernard of Clairvaux 1859, XII, cols 915–16: 'Caeterum in claustris coram legentibus fratribus quid facit illa ridicula monstrositas, mira quaedam deformis formositas, ac formosa deformitas? Quid ibi immundae simiae? quid feri leones? quid monstrosi centauri? quid semi-homines? quid maculosae tigrides? quid milites pugnantes? quid venatores tubicinantes? Videas sub uno capite multa corpora, et rursus in uno corpore capita multa. Cernitur hinc in quadrupede cauda serpentis, illinc in pisce caput quadrupedis. Ibi bestia praefert equum, capram trahens retro dimidium; hic cornutum animal equum gestat posterius. Tam multa denique, tamque mira diversarum formarum ubique varietas apparet, ut magis legere libeat in marmoribus quam in codicibus, totumque diem occupare singula ista mirando, quam in lege Dei meditando. Proh Deo! si non pudet ineptiarum, cur vel non piget expensarum?'

the High Middle Ages, wine was also distributed to the congregation, and was not only consumed by the celebrant. Beer was, however, the particular cultic drink of northern pagan areas, where horse and dog meat, which had been a staple of the diet of northern pagans, was prohibited by the new missionaries and the new Christian kings.

Earthly and Heavenly Jerusalem

Churches were dominating buildings that turned the landscape into a sacred, Christian one. They also represented a much larger world than the local, physical environments in which the new Christians lived. In the north, churches represented the German emperor and his mission for generations. They also represented the united Latin Church, Rome, and the pope. First and foremost, however, they represented Jerusalem.

It was the aim of every church builder to illustrate or recreate the heavenly Jerusalem on earth. During the eleventh century there was an elevated and growing interest in the earthly Jerusalem (Riley-Smith 1986: 20; McGinn 1978). Pilgrimages have existed since early Christian times, but by the eleventh century, they had become much more common, attracting people who wanted to see and visit the Holy City. At the same time, Jerusalem was being physically spread to the lands on the periphery of Western Europe. Relics from the Holy Land, earth from Jerusalem, sand from Jordan, even oil from Mount Olive, were transported to the remotest churches in Western Europe. Round churches were built everywhere in Europe to imitate the dome of the Church of the Holy Sepulchre and to hold relics of the True Cross. Crosses frequently capped the horizons of towns and villages throughout medieval Europe; the lands were permeated with the sacrality of the Holy Land itself. The idea was both to encourage people to go to earthly Jerusalem, but also to bring the struggle for the faith to religious borders everywhere. When, in 1108, the Archbishop of Magdeburg wrote to princes in the north urging them to go to war against the pagan Slavs — whom he described with words taken directly from Pope Urban II's Clermont sermon — he ended the letter by calling all the faithful to the defence 'of our Jerusalem in the North'.²⁶ The landscape had now, in principle, been totally transformed and totally sacralized.

Monasteries viewed Jerusalem in terms of a symbolic double meaning. The church in the monastery was a reflection of the heavenly Jerusalem, and the

²⁶ *Urkundenbuch des Erzstifts Magdeburg*: I, 249–52, no. 193; see also Constable 1999.

cloister complex represented the earthly Jerusalem. During processions on Palm Sunday, monks, lay brothers, and their invited guests would leave the church, walk around in the cloister, and stop at designated places to read and commemorate Jesus's entry into Jerusalem, and then they would follow him — or His image on the crucifix — back into the church and the heavenly Jerusalem.²⁷ The cloister became a better and safer way to heaven for most people than a physical journey to the earthly Jerusalem, as Bernard of Clairvaux described in a well-known letter about Philip who stopped at Clairvaux on his way to Jerusalem and decided to stay in the monastery:

Your Philip has found a shortcut to Jerusalem and has arrived there very quickly. He crossed the vast ocean stretching wide on every hand with a favourable wind in a very short time, and he has now cast anchor on the shores for which he was making. Even now he stands in the courts of Jerusalem [...]. He has entered the holy city and has chosen his heritage with those of whom it has been deservedly said: 'You are no longer exiles or aliens; the saints are your fellow citizens, you belong to God's household' [...]. He is no longer an inquisitive onlooker, but a devout inhabitant and an enrolled citizen of Jerusalem; but not of that earthly Jerusalem [...] but that free Jerusalem which is above and is the mother of us all [...]. And this, if you want to know, is Clairvaux. She is the Jerusalem united to the one in heaven by whole-hearted devotion, by conformity of life, and by a certain spiritual affinity.²⁸

In Vigna Domini — Other Outer Signs of Sacralization

Outside the church, the Christian landscape expanded, and through the ritualized measuring and demarcation of the land, the Christian was segregated from the pagan. Cemeteries were, for instance, marked by a wall with four huge crosses at each of its four corners and one cross in the middle. Monasteries marked their land by walking it and by carving crosses into the trees.²⁹ It was a practical measure to fix the borders between different owners, but it was also a means by which to mark a jurisdictional distinction between the land of peace in contrast to the land of chaos. In some border areas, such as on the Iberian

²⁷ The procession is analysed in more detail in Bruun 2004.

²⁸ Bernard of Clairvaux 1957–77, Epistula 64. 1–2: VIII, 157–58. Translation from Bernard of Clairvaux 1998: 91.

²⁹ Typical formulations from donation charters to ecclesiastical institutions in border areas, here from *Schlesisches Urkundenbuch*: 77, from 1202: 'villam [...] quam Stephanus castellanus meus vice mea cum plurimis circumsedentibus ambivit et signis minivit. [...] Ego in propria persona cum nobilium meorum et popularium vicinorum comitatu eam circuivi et munivi.' See also the donation to Dargun 1172, mentioned above.

Peninsula, monasteries erected special stones of peace, marked with a large cross. Both church buildings and monasteries were places of asylum.³⁰

The cleansing of the land of pagan influence was not only a physical act, by which holy objects or sites were destroyed or encapsulated in Christian churches, but it was also a metaphysical act in which evil or demons were driven out. Sometimes it became very obvious to the crusaders, such as when a black cat fled when a wooden idol was overturned during the Baltic crusades in 1168 (Saxo Grammaticus 2005, xiv. 39. 32). Yet often the cleansing is only expressed by the use of biblical textual background, which provides an allegorical and metaphorical layer to what seems to be very matter-of-fact descriptions of human acts. When the Cistercians were walking the land and cutting crosses into the trees of the lands that they inhabited and owned, they were actually also measuring it, just as Jerusalem shall be measured before the last great struggle and the second coming of Christ.

'Rise, and measure the temple of God, and the altar, and them that worship therein' (Revelation 11. 1). Measuring pagan land was in itself a way of sacralizing it, and also of gaining power to change nature and make the landscape bare and unfertile: 'These have power to shut heaven, that it rain not in the days of their prophecy: and have power over waters to turn them to blood, and to smite the earth with all plagues, as often as they will' (Revelation 11. 6).

Similarly, the First Crusade's conquest of Jerusalem in 1099 ended in a bloodbath in which so many Muslims were killed that the blood on the Temple Square in Jerusalem reached the bridles of the crusaders' horses. It may perhaps be a factual description of what actually happened,³¹ but it is certainly also an attempt to repeat what will happen during the last apocalyptic battle when the Holy City shall be cleansed from sin, and the winepress of the wrath of God shall grind: 'And the winepress was trodden without the city, and blood came out of the winepress, even unto the horse bridles, by the space of a thousand and six hundred furlongs' (Revelation 14. 20). The city was washed white with blood, and this is the background for all later crusade narratives, also those describing the conquests along the Baltic. They appreciated all of the killing and enjoyed it, because it was deemed necessary to drive out evil.

The missionary landscape was developed into the vineyard of the Lord by means of a two-step process. First it was proclaimed to be a desert, void of

³⁰ For example in Portugal, see Cocheril 1986: 256–57.

³¹ Recently, doubts have been raised regarding the possibility that the early crusader narratives actually reflect a large-scale massacre. See particularly Kedar 2004.

people, filled with wild animals, and laid bare by invaders and evil spirits. As such, it was only suited for ascetic hermits.³² This is a standard description of all pagan lands before a crusade is launched, both in south and north, and it is simply not true in material terms. Archaeological surveys have often shown that these 'empty' areas were well populated and cultivated before the Christian missionaries came. The desert should not be understood in ecological or physical terms, but as the first step towards the new sacralization of landscape.³³ The next step in this process was to proclaim it a possibly fertile land, one that could flow with milk and honey if only the right persons came and did the necessary job. This was an important element in the Crusade sermon of Pope Urban II, but also in later crusade narratives from many different areas.³⁴ When the first crusaders and missionaries arrived, the land became the vineyard of the Lord, and it was watered and became fertile with the tears of persecuted Christians and with the blood of martyrs and of slain enemies of the faith.

This ideological sacralization was closely followed by a practical one. Cistercians, for example, established granges and tilled the land with new organization and with large groups of pagan slaves under the firm control of a grange master.³⁵ They also introduced new technology such as watermills, iron-melting ovens, and salt pans. Christian rulers attracted large number of colonists from the old Christian lands. Some were specialists, such as the Flemish who were employed to dig dykes and played an important role in marshy areas in present northern Germany and Poland along the Baltic coast (Gaethke 1999: 234–35 and *passim*). Some were simple peasants who lived in the regulated villages lacking private ownership and common living, common

³² An interesting discussion about the Cistercians' use of language to describe the landscape of their mission can be found in Kienzle 2001: 8, 62–70.

³³ In late twelfth-century distinctions collections — thematically ordered word lists — 'desert' is grouped together with dragon, devil, and hell. Taken from personal communication with Tuija Ainonen, University of Helsinki.

³⁴ Pope Urban 1095 according to Robert Monachus 1854, col. 672; repeated verbatim in a Magdeburg letter from 1108, but now about Jerusalem in the North, the Baltic region (*Urkundenbuch des Erzstifts Magdeburg*: 1, 249–52, no. 193).

³⁵ The General Chapter of the Cistercians repeatedly had to forbid their houses from preventing Muslim slaves from converting to Christianity and to forbid them to buy and sell Muslim slaves, which indicates that it was a common phenomenon within the order. See Canivez 1933–41, for the year 1153, canon 25; 1157, canon 49; 1175, canon 16. A letter-writing manual from c. 1300 from one of Western Europe's largest border-area Cistercian houses, Alcobaça in Portugal, has examples of how to manumit Muslim slaves and how to advertise runaway slaves; see Gomes 2001: 209.

cultivating, common customs of all kind. By moving to the border area, they maintained and owned their own plot of land that was much larger than they could ever have dreamt about at home.³⁶ They may have become petty slave-owners to cultivate their land. The new land became the land of freedom for the Christians, but the land of slavery for the infidels.

The church structure and the new agricultural systems brought a profound change to the medieval landscape. Simultaneously, a revolution in transport and communication took place throughout medieval Europe in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries. Roads and bridges were built in huge numbers, and they not only served practical ends, but were also imbued with religious meaning — the crusaders could gain indulgences both by fighting and by building bridges. Roads and bridges opened the landscape for crusaders and missionaries, but they also connected the new land to existing Christian lands, to Rome, and ultimately to Jerusalem itself. A parallel system existed in the introduction of new and common Latin saints who gradually replaced the more local ones.³⁷ Through the saints, the local Christians were connected to the whole of Western Europe and ultimately to the heavenly Jerusalem.

Living in the Landscape?

The reorientation of the sacrality of the landscape must have meant a profound change in the way medieval man perceived himself, society, and his place in the landscape.

The clear demarcation of a Christian sacred space may be interpreted as a distinction between the sacred and the profane, between ecclesiastical and lay power. However, this is probably to overstress a modern difference that would have been much too simple in the Middle Ages. The medieval perception of borders seems rather to have been dialectical, as expressed in the teaching about the two swords, that of the Church and that of the king. The king was not a profane figure in the modern sense of the word,³⁸ he was king *Dei gratia*, and during crusades the king changed the landscape as profoundly as did the

³⁶ Described for Western Europe in general in Bartlett 1993: 106–32, especially 118–21.

³⁷ On the change from local saints to those common to the western sphere, see Bartlett 1993: 274; Vauchez 1988: 173–83; and Krötzel 1994: 47–50.

³⁸ Ernst H. Kantorowicz is still an inspiring and important study for this question (Kantorowicz 1957). It is debatable whether there has been a substantial difference between a pagan combined political and religious leadership and a Christian separation between royal and priestly functions, as argued by Przemysław Urbańczyk (Urbańczyk 2003: 19–20).

Church. The king built castles instead of stone churches. There was a division of labour between the two swords that could create tension and imbalance, and which became important in the centuries to come. Yet in the first missionary periods, the sacralization of the landscape marked the difference between Christianity and the dangerous sphere that could still have been influenced by the old paganism in some way, not the difference between king and church.

How man changed his own perception of his place in the landscape in the High Middle Ages is very difficult to know, because we do not have any firm idea of what he thought in pagan times.³⁹ We can make some vague assumptions, but all source material stems from the later Christian period. It is, however, certain that Christian theology taught that man is lord of the animals and of nature. He controls the landscape, rather than being controlled by it. If common assumptions among many scholars about an animistic pre-Christian fear of nature are right, Christianity must have been a step towards more freedom and less dependency upon the landscape.

With the Crusades, the idea of Jerusalem became extremely prominent. In Crusade sermons, Jerusalem was the navel of the earth; on medieval maps, Jerusalem was the centre of the world. The top of the circular world maps depicted the head of Christ or Paradise, in the Far East (Kline 2005: 44–48). In principle, the other place, the place ultimately different from where we live now, was reachable or at least identifiable on a map. The home here on earth became a place of exile, while the true fatherland, the true patria, became Jerusalem.⁴⁰ The result of the Crusades was not only the sacralization of the landscape at home, but also a totally new perception of the world — an allocentric world view according to which the interesting space is not where I am, but somewhere else. In that sense, the sacralization of the landscape by turning it into a new Jerusalem meant that Christians became totally liberated from the landscape in which they actually lived. In Peter Brown's formulation:

Christians worshipped a God who, in many of his aspects, was above time and space. God and his saints could always be thought of as fully 'present' to the believer, wherever he or she happened to be. In God's high world, there was no distinction between 'center' and 'periphery'. (Brown 2003: 14)

³⁹ This applies to the pagans in the North and Eastern Europe, while there is abundant source material for Muslim attitudes towards nature. Without being a specialist, it is my impression that it differed not substantially from the Christian attitude in the Middle Ages.

⁴⁰ Pope Urban II's Clermont sermon in the version of William of Malmesbury: 'Christianus totus est mundus exilium et totus mundus patria; ita exilium patria, et patria exilium' (from William of Malmesbury 1998, iv. 347. 15). This was the conclusion of a long and devoted speech that aimed to persuade people to leave their homes and go to Jerusalem.

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INSIDERS AND OUTSIDERS: THEOLOGICAL ‘LANDSCAPING’ IN EARLY MEDIEVAL PROVINCIAL LAWS IN NORWAY

Torstein Jørgensen

Introduction

In its literal sense, ‘landscape’ is, of course, a most concrete entity. However, when connected to the word ‘sacralization’, the term ‘landscape’ immediately enters into a wider frame of understanding, for the word ‘sacralization’ adds perspectives of meaning onto a physical phenomenon. Or to put it another way, it shapes a piece of pure nature into something that can be the object of interpretation and abstraction.

Sacralization of landscape implies, in one way or another, the religious — or spiritual — conquest of a certain territory. It may refer both to smaller restricted portions of land such as cult scenes or burial places, and — as will be the main focus in this article — to larger territories and entire countries.

Both the process and the content of this kind of spiritual conquest can be studied from a whole spectrum of different angles. In this article, a closer look at some texts from the early medieval Norwegian provincial laws will be examined in order to demonstrate the extent to which, and in what manner, juridical precepts contributed to the gain of new territory for what can be described as a rapidly expanding Christian world view in the European lands during the time frame in question.

As Christianity gained a foothold in medieval Norway during the course of the tenth century, and gradually took over hegemony in most aspects of reli-

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gious life during the eleventh century, the radical changes that took place also included a process in which the natural and the supernatural were understood to interact in most fields of life. It stands to reason that it is difficult to draw a precise line of demarcation between the natural and the supernatural in the medieval mind, which differed substantially from our own modern thought processes. In the life orientation of the early medieval world, transcendent reality was in many ways more real than immanent existence. Thus, the substantial content of faith and belief was no less solid than knowledge concerning what we today might categorize as natural things. However, it appears from the sources that the presence of the reality of faith — or perhaps more precisely, the actual expressions of the powers of these beliefs — on the scene of natural existence was something that did not belong to daily experiences. The presence of the supernatural was somehow perceived as being in line with the extraordinary. One perspective in these matters in particular also had a bearing upon the concept of territory.

Our focus here is directed to the question of how the early Norwegian law codes were coloured by the then-new Christian ideas of the supernatural world, and how these ideas were applied to the lands that fell under the jurisdiction of these laws. Our discourse will concentrate on texts from the period of the provincial laws recorded before the formulation of the so-called Norwegian Landis-Law of 1274 was enforced throughout the entire kingdom.

The Provincial Laws

The oldest preserved evidence concerning the Norwegian laws tells that the country was divided into four legislative districts, possibly dating back to a time prior to the unification of the Norwegian lands into one kingdom. Those were the Gulathing, Frostathing, Borgarthing, and Eidsivathing areas (see Figure 43). The provincial laws have been the object of an extensive research tradition. Issues that have been discussed are their provenance (indigenous or foreign); the relation between oral and written tradition; the chronology and internal relationship between the four laws and the course of their development, as well as different matters of their content (see Taranger 1926; Taranger 1928; Helle 2001: 39–47; Nedkvitne 2004: 27–28, 75–83; Smits 2007; Sigurðsson 2008; Landro 2010; Bagge 2010: 179–206). A special characteristic of all of these codes, as they appear in the preserved texts, is that they each contain a particular section on Christianity dealing with various matters pertaining to the new Christian order and the religious basis of society. In fact, as far as the two laws from Eastern

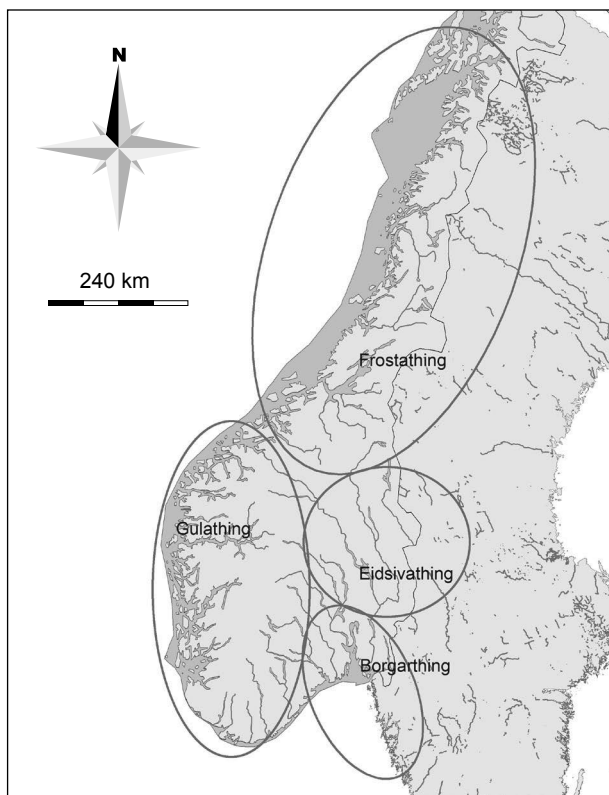


Figure 43. The approximate law districts in medieval Norway. Drawing by Sæbjørg Walaker Nordeide. Reproduced with permission.

Norway are concerned, only the Christian sections have been preserved. In this article with its focus on the new Christian understanding of the land, the textual basis will therefore be concentrated on these sections of the laws.

It is difficult to date the texts to the period from which they derive. However, the Gulathing Law maintains that the oldest layers of the precepts date back to the rule of King Olav Haraldsson the Saint (1015–30). King Magnus Erlingsson (1161–84) and Archbishop Eystein Erlendsson (1159–88) are deemed responsible for the more elaborate and updated legal codes, which were recorded in the Gulathing and Frostathing Laws respectively.¹ The oldest surviving manuscripts of these texts date to the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries.

¹ In short, the progress of development of the provincial laws can be described as follows: (1) oldest stage: Christian laws from the eleventh century; (2) the King Magnus-text of the Older Gulathing Christian Law and the Frostathing Christian Law, c. 1170; (3) King Håkon Håkonsson's new Christian Law for Gulathing and Borgarthing, c. 1250; (4) King Magnus

There is general agreement among scholars that the texts of the Christianity sections of the provincial laws appear in a number of respects as a juxtaposition of indigenous traditions and foreign impulses, and that they were (at least at their initial stages) the result of joint efforts by king and Church in close and — as it seems — rather peaceful cooperation (Sanmark 2004: *passim*; Bagge 2010: 179–82, 201–06; Nordeide 2012). As for the particular provisions brought in by the new Christian order of society, there is every indication that the leading representatives of the Church must have played the main role in the shaping of the law on these points. These provisions included detailed instructions about baptism; the new order of the week and year with the observance of Sundays and feasts with rituals, liturgies, prayers, and regular participation in Holy Communion; fasting and food; new ideas about death and the afterlife with set procedures for dealing with the dead; duties for the support of priests; and the maintenance of churches and churchyards. The learned capacity to formulate such comprehensive and detailed provisions in line with contemporary theology and ideas about missions was only to be found within the circles of the higher clergy. This situation also applied to the theological concept of land expressed in these laws.

The Perspective of Clearing New Lands to Be Incorporated into Christendom

One aspect that has hardly been in focus in studies on the Christianization of Scandinavia, but has been demonstrated in scholarly works on Christian missions elsewhere in Western Europe such as the Carolingian Empire, the British Isles, and Ireland, is the territorial dimension of this expansion in more theological terms. One main perspective is the conquest of new lands under a Christian sovereign and under divine protection of the Christian God. Thus, the Carolingian emperors referred to their subjects as *fideles dei et nostri*, and a common term for Christendom was *populus Christi*.² The focus on land from this perspective also applies to laws and jurisdiction (Ó Corráin, Breatnach, and Breen 1984: 394–400). It seems, as has been argued in the context of other regions, that this aspect was motivated by ideas and theologies concerning land taken from the Old Testament rather than the New Testament (Douglas 2002a; Douglas 2002b; Hardinge 1972).

the Law-Mender's new Christian Law for Gulathing (1267) and Borgarthing (1268), and Archbishop Jon's Christian Law of 1274 (Riisøy 2006: 39–40).

² For the two terms, see Schneider 1978: 235.

A fundamental element in the Old Testament understanding of land was that of the covenant between God and the people of Israel, selected by God among all peoples on earth, and for whom a chosen land was granted. On this land and among this people, the Kingdom of God on earth was understood to be realized. When studying the different provisions of the Norwegian provincial laws, it is difficult not to read also these as resonating in some way with Old Testament legislation about the Jewish land as the place for a cultic union between God and his chosen people as expressed in the Pentateuch, especially Deuteronomy 12–26, Leviticus 17–26, and the so-called Book of Covenant in Exodus 21–23. Throughout the history of the Church a central element in her self-understanding has been the tenet of the Church as the chosen people of the new covenant.

In a very similar way as in the Old Testament, the Norwegian laws with their different instructions and rather concrete measures prescribe how the land of the new Christian kingdom should be conceived as a pure Christian territory void of pagan elements. From this point of view the idea of ‘theological landscaping’ expressed in the provincial laws applied to the territory of the entire country in the sense that all the lands within the boundaries of the Norwegian realm by the resolutions on religion at the four things implied that Norway was incorporated as an integral part of Christendom. Or to put it in theological terms, the Norwegian territories became part of the Kingdom of God of the new covenant.

To what extent this was mainly a matter of theory and to what extent the different codes were actually implemented by the execution of jurisdiction is not easy to determine (Bagge 2010: 197). Yet, it remains an interesting fact that these promulgations actually did find their way into the law texts. We can see no other reasonable explanation for this than as a reflection of contemporary church ideology, based on the model from the Carolingian Empire, the British Isles, and Ireland.

Outside Christendom lay the pagan lands.³ Whereas the Christian lands were supposed to be ruled by God, supported by powers of heaven such as angels and saints, and supervised by Christian princes and bishops, the pagan lands were thought to be under the dominion of evil powers originating from the devil. The world was looked upon as an arena of constant combat between the two.⁴ The idea of the victorious Christ is a well-known motif in North European literature

³ For a more general discussion on the relation of the new Christian laws to pagan cult, see Steinsland 2005: 435–44.

⁴ This was also a basic motif behind the Scandinavian crusades in the Baltic (Jensen 2006; Jensen 2009).

and art from around the year 1000, including Scandinavia (Andrén, Jennbert, and Raudvere 2006: 128; Sanmark 2002: 97; Steinsland 2005: 453–54). A main concern in this article is to demonstrate that several of the provisions in the early medieval Norwegian provincial laws are to be understood as a reflection of these perspectives. We will develop this idea in more detail below.

The Laws as an Indicator of the Tension between the Good and Evil Powers of the Supernatural World

From the outset, it is important to note that the set of laws which are the focus of this analysis were recorded in a milieu in which the religious world was close at hand. Religion was more than just an ideological or ethical basis for the law. Rather, the supernatural world consisted of powers — good and evil — which manifested themselves in the arena of human existence and to which people were bound to relate. This applied both to individuals and to society as a whole. Accordingly, the aim of the laws was not only to regulate ways of living as far as human relations were concerned, but also the interaction of human beings with supernatural powers, since these were viewed as directly active in and relevant to everyday life.⁵ Since these powers could be good or evil, one objective of the concrete codes of law was to limit damage from the evil powers and promote the influence of the good ones. Additionally, the different law codes also concerned areas of life in which different types of human behaviour could affect the actions of the supernatural powers within society.

The intensive battle between the powers that could work against the well-being of an organized society and those that aimed to sustain life, health, and prosperity within specified landmarks created a constant state of tension. Within this perspective, life itself became a risky venture. Evil powers lay in wait everywhere looking for human misbehaviour as bridgeheads for their disastrous efforts. Individuals were always at risk of becoming instruments of evil powers, or they could deliberately search for such a relationship. If this happened, the delicate balance of living prosperously was in danger. On the other hand, good had its representatives, those who stood close to God, the Virgin, and the saints, as well as fellow human beings, either through their profession as priests, monks, or nuns, or by special vocation as objects of extraordinary revelations, or as persons endowed with miraculous skills.

⁵ These perspectives are also an integral part of the pagan cult in Europe prior to the arrival of Christianity (Dowden 2000).

The Beginning of the Law

In the first paragraph of the Older Borgarthing Christian Law, a basic tension between good and evil powers is noted:

This is the beginning of our laws that we shall bow towards the east and give ourselves to Christ, and pay reverence to churches and priests. Every child born in this realm shall be christened and carried to church, except those who are misshapen [...]. When the mother is unable to feed the child, when the heels are where the toes should be, or toes where the heels should be, if the chin is between the shoulders, the back of the neck on the chest, the muscle of the lower leg on the front side, the eyes in the back of the head, if the child has the flippers of a seal or the head of a dog, these children are to be placed in the unholy place,⁶ in heaps of stones, the haunt of the devil, where neither men nor cattle walk.⁷

A basic concern was to secure the well-being of society and lands under the protection of the most powerful of good powers: Christ himself. All citizens were, therefore, obliged to turn their attention to the east, which was the direction from which the second coming of Christ was predicted to occur (Matthew 24. 27; see also Job 38. 12–15; Malachi 4. 2). The text here cites reverence to Christ as the very basis of the community, the regulations of the laws included. As a consequence, all people were instructed to lead their children into the heavenly and earthly kingdom of Christ through baptism. The idea was one of Christ as the ruler of rulers, and His rule became the pillar of the newly established Christian realm of Norway. On this point the Norwegian laws express the same basic theologized idea as expressed in Carolingian laws imposed on the recently Christianized lands of the Saxons.⁸

Nevertheless, it was believed that evil powers could take hold from the moment of birth. One belief was that evil spirits would take hold of children before they were baptized. Another was that evil powers or spirits could inflict their evil force upon a foetus, usually by causing serious deformity or handicap. The quoted text shows that severely deformed children tended to be viewed as

⁶ The word *forvé* used here is a rare word with unclear meaning. The latter part *vé* obviously means holy place, and the former part *for* is probably a prefix to indicate negation.

⁷ Older Borgarthing Law I. 1; see Halvorsen and Rindal 2008 for the original text. Translations here and in the following quotations by T. Jørgensen.

⁸ 'If there is anyone of the Saxon people lurking among them unbaptized, and if he scorns to come to baptism and wishes to absent himself and stay pagan, let him die' and 'If anyone follows pagan rites and causes the body of a dead man to be consumed by fire [...] let him pay with his life' (Brown 2003: 432).

those who had been touched by the devil and, as such, represented the arm of evil extended into the Christian community. The way of solving this problem was to give these creatures back to the devil by leaving them in heaps of stone where ‘neither men nor cattle walk’.

Less severe deformities were, however, not always seen as the work of the devil, and children born with faces like shells or pods are mentioned as examples of this. This refers either to severe cases of split lips and palates or to cases of faces without mouths at all. The point is that the deformity is of such a kind that it prevents the child from consuming food or drink, meaning that such a child was doomed to die an early death. Consequently, these children were to be brought to the church to be blessed with the sign of the cross, put in front of the church door and watched over by the closest next of kin until the spirit left them. Furthermore, they were to be buried in the churchyard, their soul prayed for, and finally left with the kind of hope that God might bestow upon them.⁹

Baptism

Given these legal and societal views, the vital importance of baptism in early Christian Norwegian society is perhaps self-evident. Securing the favour of Christ was at stake, and baptism of all citizens was vital in this respect. The detailed regulations clearly state that all possible efforts were to be made so that all children might be christened. The provisions of the Borgarthing Law illustrate this: if some danger were to befall the unbaptized baby on the way to church, those around it are instructed to perform the baptism. If there was water at hand, the child should be dipped in it, and the baptism formula spoken. If there was no fresh water, snow, sea water, dew, or saliva could be used. The important thing seems to have been to have the child baptized, both for the salvation of its soul and for the purpose of warding off evil powers. Such a baptism was also fully valid. Accordingly, if the child died afterwards, it was to be buried in the churchyard (Older Borgarthing Law I. 2: Halvorsen and Rindal 2008).

⁹ Older Borgarthing Law I. 1: ‘Another child is born pod, with a pod where the face should be, and apparent to all that it cannot take food, and cannot grow. This child shall be carried to church, be blessed with the sign of the cross, put in front of the church door and watched over by the closest next of kin until the spirit leaves it. It shall be buried in the churchyard, its soul prayed for and left with the hope that God might bestow.’ See also Gulathing Law I. 21 (Helle 2001).

Similarly, we should interpret other regulations in these laws along similar lines, such as deadlines for having a child baptized and the punishment for having left a child unbaptized for more than twelve months.¹⁰

Another clear dissociation from former pagan practices expressed in these laws was the ban on leaving babies to die in the wilderness. Leaving children who were supposed to become members of the Christian community to the devil in this manner, was seen as a resounding way of providing prey for the evil powers. A text from the older version of the Gulathing Law (I. 22: Helle 2001) notes: 'If someone carries one's heathen child out [in the wilderness] and lets it die, he shall be fined three marks to the bishop.' In what is probably a later version of the same code, the ban is sharpened in two ways: it also mentions the exposure of baptized children and describes the culprit as a murderer, who by virtue of the crime would be declared an outlaw with all of his worldly goods confiscated. The later text seems to reflect a more advanced juridical stage with more abstract ideas of right and wrong, but also still visible is the original dynamic of the pressure from the tension between good and evil supernatural powers.

Similar ideas concerning outlaws are behind regulations in the Gulathing Law. Traitors of the king, those who commit bestiality, thieves, those who commit suicide, and people referred to as *mordvarger* — that is, murder wolves — were not to be buried in churchyards. One obvious reason for this is that they were regarded as some kind of monsters occupied by evil. Their corpses were to be placed in the so-called *flodmål*, that is, the foreshore along the seaside between flood and ebb-tide (Gulathing Law I. 23: Helle 2001). People having sex with animals were, however, not necessarily to be put to death but could be banished instead (Gulathing Law I. 30: Helle 2001). The animal with which the act had been committed was regarded as unclean — it could not be eaten, and was to be drowned in a lake or in the sea.

¹⁰ Gulathing Law I. 21: 'Every child born after Christmas Eve shall be baptized before Lent. If born during Lent, it shall be baptized at Easter. If it is born after Easter, it shall be baptized before Midsummer Day. And every child born after Michaelmas shall be baptized before Christmas Eve [...]. But if the child is not baptized within the set date, a penalty of 3 *øre* must be paid to the bishop, and the child baptized even if it is after that date. But if the person resists baptizing and keeps a heathen child in the house through two set terms, he shall pay 3 marks to the bishop and baptize the child from its heathendom. If he resists and keeps a heathen child in his house for 12 months, he has forfeited every penny of his property. But there remains the possibility of confession and penitence. If he still resists, they are both to be expelled from the realm of our King.'

*Witchcraft and Sorcery*¹¹

Witchcraft and sorcery were among the most reprehensible of crimes, according to the early medieval Norwegian provincial codes. Several paragraphs in the four provincial codes are concerned with such acts, and are perhaps indications that such practices were widespread and that the notional basis was strong. Witches, of different kinds and different names, were the creatures with the closest connection to supernatural evil and, as such, the most dangerous of destructive figures identified as living within one's own community. Who were these people, what crimes did they commit against their contemporaries, and what were their mysterious and evil acts (Steinsland and Sørensen 1994: 46–49; Steinsland 2005: 353–56)?

Predicting the future, as well as affecting and controlling it,¹² was viewed as a power belonging to witches and sorcerers. The early Norwegian provincial codes categorized the capacity to tell the future — usually by reading someone's fortune — as an extraordinary matter of supernatural origin. While it was accepted that heavenly powers might reveal the future to some selected individuals, humans were to be satisfied with the ordinary limitations given to men regarding such knowledge. According to the Gulathing Law, acting as a fortune teller was worse than merely listening to such predictions. Both acts were strictly forbidden¹³ and severely punished by banishment and a fine of 40 marks respectively.

The step was short from the wish to know the future to the desire to affect it and control it (i.e. to divine it). Two prohibited phenomena in the laws — *galder* and *gerninger* — are often mentioned in the same context as predictions. Both are described as practices by which the perpetrator can affect the future by the help of supernatural powers, in order to harm somebody. *Galder*, probably a derivative of the verb *gale*, seems to have referred to the special way — by singing or uttering sounds in a high voice — by which magical curses could be directed onto those whom one wanted to harm (Steinsland 2005: 318–26). The term *gerning* simply means deed, and its derivate *fordæda* means misdeed.¹⁴ *Galder*

¹¹ For a more general discussion of the phenomena of witchcraft and sorcery in the Middle Ages, see Kieckhefer 2000.

¹² The phenomena of fortune telling and divination of the future were widespread in pre-Christian North European lands; see Davidson 1993: 136–39.

¹³ Older Frostathing Law III. 15, v. 45 (Hagland and Sandnes 1994); Older Borgarthing Christian Law I. 16 (Halvorsen and Rindal 2008); Gulathing Christian Law I. 28 (Helle 2001).

¹⁴ For these terms, see Older Borgarthing Christian Law I. 16 (Halvorsen and Rindal

and *gerning* were closely linked to *seid* (Steinsland and Sørensen 1994: 80–82; Steinsland 2005: 306–09), which was a standard Nordic word for witchcraft.¹⁵

A special way of communicating with supernatural evil powers was by sitting outdoors — in Norwegian known as *utesete* (Older Borgarthing Christian Law I. 16: Halvorsen and Rindal 2008). It seems that the term refers to the act of sitting outdoors at night, possibly on grave mounds or crossroads (Gulathing Law I. 32: Helle 2001), most likely in order to wake the dead or to call on their spirits (Steinsland and Sørensen 1994: 87). This practice was a way of communicating with the supernatural through deep and long-term concentration and meditation. Other literary sources reveal that this practice was connected to female fortune tellers in particular.¹⁶ In the Older Borgarthing Law, sitting outdoors was associated with other practices that were regarded as so severe that no penance could compensate for them. Consequently, perpetrators of such atrocities were to be reckoned as so-called *ubotamenn*: men who were barred from compensating for their misdeed. These people were normally banished, often into pagan countries, and their property was confiscated.

Another of the acts of the same severe kind listed in the same paragraph was to seek contact with the pagan Saami people (in Norse referred to as Finns) for the purpose of making use of their special skills in fortune telling and witchcraft. In the Older Eidsivathing Law, a special instrument used by the Saami in these matters was the *vitt*, which seems to have been some kind of a drum (Older Eidsivathing Law I. 24, I. 45: Halvorsen and Rindal 2008). Reference is also made to the forbidden practice of seeking the Saami for remedies.¹⁷ This, in all likelihood, refers to the need for medical help and healing, but searching for a remedy for sickness did not change the severity of the act as a way of establishing corridors of contact between the Christian community and evil pagan powers — who certainly could offer people some timely fortune.

The paragraph also lists some rather peculiar details of the outrageous doings mostly connected with female witches. ‘Worst of all’, it states, ‘is the sorceress who performs magic on cow or calf, woman or child’ by for instance putting ‘hair, legs of frogs, nails or other items into people’s bed clothes’ (Older Borgarthing Law I. 16: Halvorsen and Rindal 2008). Such acts would inflict

2008); Older Eidsivathing Law I. 45, II. 34 (Halvorsen and Rindal 2008); Older Frostathing Law III. 15 (Hagland and Sandnes 1994).

¹⁵ *Galder* is mentioned in the juridical texts, whereas *seid* is not.

¹⁶ For instance in *Völuspá*, the Nordic figure *völva*.

¹⁷ Older Borgarthing Law I. 45: ‘leita seg botemiddel’ (Halvorsen and Rindal 2008).

devastating effects on some of the fundamental pillars of the orderly society: child-rearing and livestock. This menace must have been regarded as a threat to life itself. The items mentioned were instruments to be employed by the evil powers — and as such, highly visible representations of these powers — in the very midst of human society.

Similarly forbidden were the acts of a woman who ‘bites a finger or a toe from her child’ as it is said ‘in order to live longer’, or ‘the mistress or master who brings up their child as a heathen’ for the same purpose (Older Borgarthing Law I. 16: Halvorsen and Rindal 2008). This is a clear indication that children who remained unbaptized were regarded as the same as those who were dedicated to pagan powers. The severing of fingers and toes from babies was probably viewed as an act similar to the offering of parts of their bodies to evil forces.

Blood Ritual and Idolatry

The provincial laws regard the traditional Nordic blood ritual to be as severe a crime as witchcraft. The blood sacrifice — the *blót* — was one of the most central and popular religious services (Steinsland and Sørensen 1994: 73–80; Steinsland 2005: 274–305). The blood used was that of a horse, smeared onto idols and the pillars of the high seat of the chieftain or master of the house, and drunk by the participants. A somewhat blurred formulation in the Older Eidsivathing Law places a ban on making use of *blót* items made of clay or dough in the shape of human beings, perhaps a remnant of former blood rituals making use of human blood (Older Eidsivathing Law I. 24: Halvorsen and Rindal 2008). All four provincial codes contain bans on *blót*.¹⁸ In the Christian realm such an act of pure idolatry was simply not tolerable since, as has been shown, the pagan gods were seen as God’s adversaries and generally identified with the devil. In later layers of the Gulathing Law, the reference to pagan gods has been moderated by mentions of the *landvette*, some subterranean goblin-like being, instead of the pagan deities, probably because the cult of Odin, Tor, and other Norse deities had been abolished in the late twelfth century. However, the *blót* ritual, the items used, and the idol figures must be counted as not only visual, but quite spectacular representations of evil supernatural powers as conceived by the Christian makers of the four law codes.

¹⁸ Older Borgarthing Law I. 16 (Halvorsen and Rindal 2008); Gulathing Law I. 29 (Helle 2001); Older Eidsivathing Law I. 24, I. 45 (Halvorsen and Rindal 2008); Older Frostathing Law III. 15 (Hagland and Sandnes 1994).

Conclusion

The first modelling of the four provincial Norwegian laws took place in the early part of the Nordic Middle Ages. A main and overarching perspective characterizing theology during this pre-scholastic period was what the Swedish church historian Alf Hårdelin calls the big story: the dynamic narrative about human salvation, from Paradise lost to Paradise regained (Hårdelin 2006: 153). The basic perspective is less abstract in terms, definitions, and dialectics, and less divided in terms of given disciplines, than that which is later found with scholastic thinkers. To be sure, the shaping of the Norwegian provincial laws coincided in time with the appearance of the more famous law schools in South and Central Europe and of Gratian's *Decretum*. The new Christian interpretation of the world that was brought into Scandinavia at that time introduced what we could call a refurnishing of the supernatural world of good and evil figures. Yet, in its early stage it did not change or remove the close and direct impact these powers were thought to have on small and great aspects of human existence. An aim of this article has been to illustrate how directly the large and basic Christian narrative could inspire lawmakers and how short and unsystematic the move was from this story into actual legal statutes.

The imprint of the Christian world view on the early medieval Norwegian provincial laws of course did not imply a sacralization of landscape in the same sense as did the establishing of new sanctuaries such as churches, cemeteries, and other holy places. Yet, in a wider sense it was. The incorporation of Norwegian territories into Christendom, and the organization of society within these lands according to Christian norms as expressed in the law codes dealt with above, was thus also the theological landscaping of a new terrain.

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Figure 44. Old Town Bridge Tower and Charles Bridge in Prague. The tower facade displays statues of Charles IV, Wenceslas IV, and the Bohemian patron saints, Praha, Ústav dějin umění, Akademie věd České republiky. Photo: Prokop Paul. Reproduced with permission.

THE SACRED TOPOGRAPHY OF MEDIEVAL PRAGUE

Zoë Opačić

On 11 December 1378 a mournful and solemn procession, the like of which had never been seen in Prague before, left the royal palace on Hradčany and slowly wound its way down the steep streets of the Malá Strana district towards the bridge across the Vltava river (Figures 44 and 45). The long column of people was led by candle-bearers, some five hundred in number and all dressed in black, followed by students and university professors, canons, abbots, and monks from all the monasteries in Prague. Next in line were the standard bearers holding banners of the Crown Lands of Bohemia and that of the Holy Roman Empire accompanied by mounted knights. Riding closely behind them a single knight carried the Emperor's helmet in its ermine cover and his sword pointed downwards. Following him, thirty councillors from the Old and the New Town of Prague bore a magnificent bier covered with golden cloth and protected by a golden baldachin supported by twelve knights. Dressed in crimson robes, his gloved hands studded with rings, the embalmed effigy-like body of Emperor Charles IV lay on the bier with his three crowns, Imperial Roman, Bohemian, and Lombard, and the Imperial insignia placed next to him. Behind his father's catafalque Charles IV's heir Wenceslas led the procession of noblemen. Empress Elizabeth headed the procession of noblewomen, filling some twenty carriages draped in black.

The funeral cortège made its first stop at the church of St Clement at the foot of the Charles Bridge in the Old Town. After a change of pallbearers the procession continued to the New Town, making another halt at the town hall before continuing across the main square towards Charles's Slavonic foundation, the

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Prague Castle (Hradčany) and Malá Strana on the far left. Old Town directly opposite on the right. Hatched Sections – New Town and its religious foundations: 1. Sts Henry and Kunegunda's; 2. St Stephen's; 3. Corpus Christi; 8. Our Lady of the Snows; 9. Emmaus Monastery; 10. St Ambrose's; 11. St Katherine's; 12. St Apollinaris's; 13. Our Lady on the Lawn; 14. Karlov (St Charlemagne's). Gates: 22. Poříčská; 23. Horská; 24. Prokopius's; 25. St John's. Squares: Charles's Square is at 3; Wenceslas's Square continues from gate 24 to the Old Town; Senovážné (or Senný trh) at 1. Dotted section at the bottom of the plan – Vyšehrad

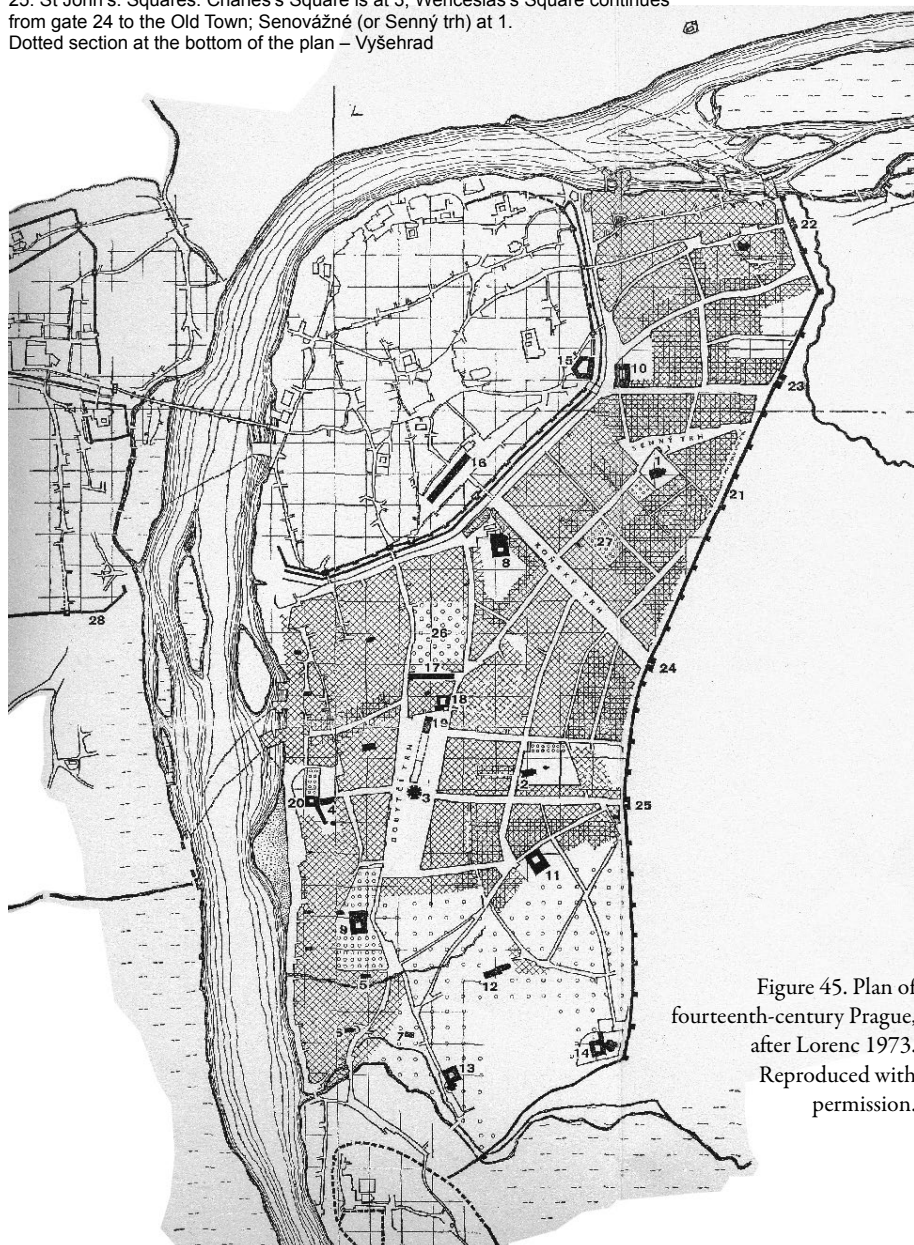


Figure 45. Plan of fourteenth-century Prague, after Lorenc 1973. Reproduced with permission.

Emmaus monastery, where the bearers changed again. Then, undoubtedly replicating the pre-coronation ritual which the Emperor devised some thirty years earlier, the procession ascended to Vyšehrad — the ancient Přemyslid fortress at the southern tip of the city — where a vigil was kept over the Emperor's body in the provost's palace, the very place where his mother, the last Přemyslid queen, had died. The process was reversed the following day, when the procession reassembled after Mass and made its way back from Vyšehrad, via the Emmaus monastery, to the Old Town. After two more candlelit vigils (in the Old Town Franciscan church of St James and at the Knights of St John's in Malá Strana) the cortège slowly returned to the castle where the Emperor was finally laid to rest in the cathedral on 15 December.¹

The funeral of Charles IV, so vividly retold in the Augsburg Chronicle, was clearly a memorable piece of late medieval theatre with carefully orchestrated public outpourings of grief for a dead ruler. Planned in every detail (and probably by the Emperor himself), the month-long *pompa funebris* commemorated over thirty years of a successful reign which transformed Prague in almost every respect. Honoured by his subjects, witnesses to that change, and surrounded by the insignia of his majesty, the Emperor — nomadic in death as in life — made one last valedictory journey through Prague revisiting the landmarks of his reign. This, however, was more than just a lap of honour; it was a testimony of a close ideological bond that existed between the ruler and his city, whose monuments and inhabitants defined the physiognomy of the ritual. The itinerary of Charles's posthumous pilgrimage through Prague encapsulated in its topographical stages both a lifetime's journey and a compressed history of Bohemia: the rise and demise of the Přemyslid dynasty in Vyšehrad; the origins of Slavonic Christianity commemorated at the Emmaus monastery; and the cosmopolitan grandeur of the imperial New Town, culminating at the modern residence (and the mausoleum) of the new national dynasty, the Luxembourgs, whose succession offered a promise of the renewed continuity and future prosperity of the kingdom.

The city Charles IV was leaving behind could hardly have been more different from the modest Bohemian capital with a cluster of Romanesque and Early

¹ There are no surviving contemporary Czech descriptions of Charles IV's funeral. The main source is the Augsburg Chronicle (1369–1469), which is a reliable but almost certainly not a first-hand account. The chronicler, Burchard Zink of Memmingen, probably followed some other earlier sources, now lost (Oefelius 1763: 258–59). Additional sources are provided by Tomek 1875: 317–20, and Heřmanský 1958: 343–54. The funeral of Charles IV and its contemporary context have been expertly summarized by Šmahel 1993, published again in Šmahel 2002: 133–60. Some elements of the funeral including the number of participants and especially the involvement of Charles's heir Wenceslas and other relatives are speculative.



Figure 46. St Vitus's Cathedral, south portal and tower, Prague. Praha, Ústav dějin umění, Akademie věd České republiky. Reproduced with permission.

Gothic buildings that he encountered on his return from France in 1333.² On the site of the old castle on Hradčany used for centuries by his Přemyslid forbears, which according to his autobiography he found 'levelled to the ground', a new palace and chapel rose built *modo gallico*, in the French manner he had come to admire during his formative years spent at the Valois court (Nagy and

² For a summary of the development of Romanesque Prague, see Dragoun 2009. The political and cultural standing of Bohemia in the critical period of the change from the rule of the Přemyslid to that of the Luxembourg dynasty is vividly brought to life by the exhibition catalogue Benešová 2010.



Figure 47. Egidius Sadeler, *Panorama of Prague*, 1606. Detail showing the New Town with Vyšehrad on the far right. Charles Square with the chapel of Corpus Christi is in the centre; Emmaus monastery is close to the embankment (lower right); St Apollinaris's and Karlov are immediately above it near the city wall. Collection of the author. Reproduced with permission.

Schaer 2001: 68–71, Emler and Jireček 1884: 331). Next to it, on the site of the eleventh-century episcopal basilica, stood the new Gothic choir of St Vitus's Cathedral, fashioned as the Bohemian coronation church, the royal mausoleum, the site of St Wenceslas's shrine, and the seat of the recently established archbishopric of Prague (Figure 46). The only stone bridge connecting the two parts of the town erected in the twelfth century and washed away by floods in the fourteenth century was replaced with a new structure and a tower-shaped gateway crowning its eastern approach (Figure 44). Finally, on the stretch of sparsely populated countryside between the Old Town and Vyšehrad a new part of town was laid out with a regular network of streets, large squares, a separate ring of walls, and four gates (Figures 45 and 47). Encompassing an area of some 360 hectares, the New Town was one of the most ambitious urban developments undertaken by a single ruler and certainly the largest in medieval Europe outside Italy, and yet it remains overlooked in studies of medieval urbanism.³

The town was founded in 1348, the same year as Prague University, and together with the building projects on Hradčany, it embodied the newfound confidence and ambition of the Bohemian capital, which Charles IV shaped both politically and architecturally as his imperial seat.⁴ In a carefully worded foundation charter Charles set out his main reason for this expansion. Situated as it was

³ The cursory approach of English-speaking scholarship is typified by Kostof's informed but brief caption in Kostof 1999: fig. 57, p. 73.

⁴ Summarized in Crossley and Opačić 2005.

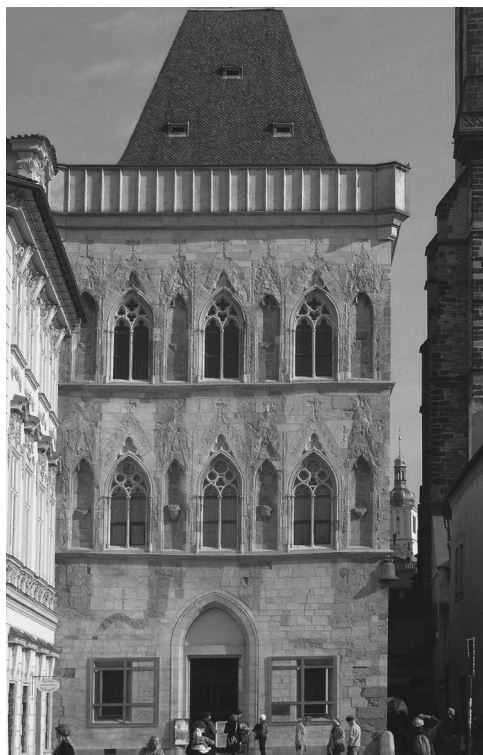


Figure 48. The House at the Stone Bell, Old Town Square, Prague. Photo: Klára Benešová.
Reproduced with permission.



Figure 49. Statue of a queen from the facade of the House at the Stone Bell. Praha, Museum hlavního města Prahy. 1310–15.
Photo: Vlado Bohdan.
Reproduced with permission.

in the ‘middle of the kingdom and its most fertile place’ but small in size, Prague, according to Charles, could not cope with a growing population and the large number of newcomers (Spěváček 1958: 150–51, n. 297). Despite this pragmatic claim, the evidence is that the Emperor wished to create a cosmopolitan centre that would attract even more visitors, who would come to study, trade, and, from 1354, attend one of the largest public displays of relics in Europe.

The topographical history of medieval Prague, still vividly etched on its modern townscape, shares many of its diagnostic features with other early medieval dynastic settlements. It consists of clearly demarcated but interdependent districts each with its own definable identity and status: the hilltop of Hradčany as the oldest part and nucleus of political and spiritual authority; the merchants’ quarters (Malá Strana and Old Town) straddling the embankment below, their

picturesque irregularity and density contrasted by the disciplined regularity of the vastly extended New Town.⁵ Charles IV played up Prague's scenographic possibilities through a creation of architectural accents at its main topographical points. Thus, the dramatic effect of the cathedral crowning the city's highest point was emphasized not only by its new and substantially taller Gothic choir but by the agglomeration of striking architectural features on its south, town-facing side, including a dazzling gilded mosaic over the portal (Figure 46). The placing of a tower at the Old Town end of the stone bridge was a way of marking an important boundary between the commercial part of the city and the 'royal' left bank, but it also provided a canvas for the monumental tableaux of regal and spiritual power aimed at those approaching the castle (Figure 44).

Just as the new Prague Cathedral incorporated the key nodes of the old basilica's liturgical layout (including the site of St Wenceslas's burial), resulting in some eccentric solutions in its design (Benešová 2003; Crossley 1999), the erection of the Old Town Bridge Tower may have also been a way of resurrecting a lost landmark. The new tower replaced the fortifying towers on the east and west sides of the previous structure known as Judith Bridge. That sense of topographical and dynastic continuity between Romanesque and Gothic Prague is underlined by the integration of the smaller twelfth-century tower on the west side into the fabric of Charles IV's new bridge, possibly in homage to its founder King Vladislav II (1140–72, king from 1158), whose sculpted image appears on the tower.⁶ Furthermore, retracing their steps to the Old Town Square visitors would have encountered another precursor to the bridge tower's sculpted ensemble in the crowned and enthroned figures of a king and queen — almost certainly Charles IV's parents — on the tower-like façade of their former residence, the so-called House at the Stone Bell (Figures 48 and 49).⁷ The two towers, therefore, marked important stations of Luxembourg power in the city from the site associated with the dramatic beginnings of John of Luxembourg's reign, including the first inaugural court held in the Old Town Square, to the triumph of Charles IV's imperial regime on Hradčany.⁸

⁵ Similar layout is encountered in many other medieval cities such as Meissen, Basel, and Nuremberg; however, in that sense Prague resembles most closely its contemporary rival — Krakow. For the comparative discussion of town planning in Prague and Krakow, see Opačić forthcoming. For general patterns of urban development, see Kostof 1999: 71–121.

⁶ The relief discovered in the nineteenth century is difficult to identify; other suggestions include King Wenceslas II (1205–53) who was responsible for repairing Judith Bridge. For a recent discussion of Judith Bridge, see Dragoun 2010.

⁷ For the analysis of the House at the Stone Bell, see Benešová 2009.

⁸ The third royal tower, the Powder Tower, was erected after 1383 by Wenceslas IV on the



Figure 50. Our Lady of the Snows, New Town, Prague.
Photo: Zoë Opačić. Reproduced with permission.

To Charles, fascinated by ceremony and sensitive to historical precedents, architecture offered a perfect medium for expression. Buildings could appear to be both modern and retrospective, their symbolism could be richly articulated or subtly nuanced in their form and decoration, but at the hands of the Emperor's architects they always had a rhetorical quality and a power to engage the viewer. The colossal scale of the New Town and the absence of any significant urban constraints on its site gave scope for a more expansive architectural statement than the individual monuments in the old part of the town would allow. By reclaiming the vast tracts of land surrounding the limits of the Old Town, Charles and his planners not only intended to extend the urban perimeters of Prague and to cultivate its rural margins; the construction of the new district was also a way of recasting — by means of topography — the city's image. The generous chequerboard plan of the New Town, deliberately evoking classical town planning, with squares of epic proportions and strategically

edge of the Old Town — and the beginning of the street that led to the Old Town Square (now Celetná street) — and adjacent to his residence which stood on the site of today's Municipal House, thus creating an extended royal processional route between the Old Town and the Castle.

positioned monuments, seems to epitomize the notion of a triumphant city designed in the 'Grand Manner' (Kostof 1999: 8), as befitted the new capital of the Roman Empire.⁹

The irregular geography of the new district site also provided the opportunity for the creation of numerous vantage points. The principal religious foundations were situated along the main routes, facing squares or on promontories such as that of Skalka (the Emmaus monastery), Větrník (St Apollinaris's), or Karlov (St Charlemagne's) (Figures 45 and 47). The New Town's eclectic array of newly founded churches and monasteries provided a spiritual focus for the city with a strong cosmopolitan dimension. With the ever greater blurring of distinctions between the public and private characteristic of Charles's patronage, those foundations also doubled as personal mementos of his reign commemorating his French upbringing (in the Sainte-Chapelle inspired choir of Our Lady of the Snows, Figure 50); his devotion to imperial cults (Sts Henry and Kunegunda's, St Charlemagne's) and to a family patron saint (St Katherine's); Italian religious influences (Florentine Servite nuns at Our Lady on the Lawn, ancient Lombard liturgy at St Ambrose's, as well as the Roman dedication of Our Lady of the Snows); and especially his fascination with the semi-mythical origins of Slav Christianity (Slav Benedictines at the Emmaus monastery).¹⁰

Criss-crossing this substantial landscape were major routes leading to the New Town's gates, connecting the three main squares (now known as Charles's, Wenceslas's, and Senovážné), and the principal artery between Vyšehrad and the Old Town (Figure 45). Originally an old thoroughfare between two distant districts of Prague but now fashioned as Prague's main ceremonial axis, New Town's *via sacra* played an important role in Charles IV's coronation, his funeral, and, as we shall see, the annual processing of the Passion relics and imperial insignia into Charles Square.

The creation of such corridors of passage through a city linking its main sites is an important facet of Italian medieval and Renaissance civic (self)representation. One such well-known 'structural axis' (Trachtenberg 1997: 240), Florence's Via Calzaiuoli, connected the city's bipolar ends: the centre of its religious life concentrated in the Piazza del Duomo (the area of the cathedral and the Baptistry), on the one hand; and the municipal forum of the Piazza

⁹ The ancient Roman Empire deployed the grid plan in the urbanization of important centres as a symbol of a new order. On the development of the grid-shaped towns including new towns, see Kostof 2001: 103–11.

¹⁰ Crossley and Opačić 2005: 63–66. Opačić 2003: 118–26, with references to further bibliography.

della Signoria, the home to the Palazzo Vecchio and the Loggia dei Lanzi, on the other. Along this route rose prominent public institutions: the votive church of S. Carlo, the granary and loggia of Orsanmichele, and the charitable foundation of Bigallo.¹¹ In Siena, the course of the Strada Romana — a continuation of the via Francigena — bisected the city in a series of connected streets, pausing at the halfway point, like Prague's *via sacra*, at its largest open public space, the Campo.¹² This same scenic route was taken by Charles IV during his tumultuous brief stay in town on his way to Rome in 1355. Entering at Strada Romana's northern gate, the Porta Camollia, Charles IV and Anna of Świdnica rode into the city under golden baldachins and to the sounds of festive music as far as the Palazzo Salimbeni where they retired for the night.¹³ The following morning the Emperor followed Strada Romana on foot as far as the Campo before continuing to the cathedral and then after the Mass to its piazza where he witnessed the swearing of the oath of allegiance by the city's representatives (the Syndici).

Paschal resonances of this imperial adventus would have been unmistakable to the citizens of Siena and also to Charles himself whose subsequent coronation in Rome was timed to coincide with Easter celebrations. However his first encounter with Rome was markedly different from that described in Siena. On the eve of his triumphant coronation procession Charles chose to enter the city incognito as a pilgrim on a path to its spiritual landmarks.¹⁴ Rome also had its sacred path, the route taken by the procession of the venerable icon of Christ, the so-called *Acheropita*, on the eve of the feast of the Assumption, from the Sancta Sanctorum in the Lateran to Santa Maria Maggiore, the church dedicated to the same miraculous vision of the Virgin as was Our Lady of the Snows in Prague.¹⁵ The *via sacra* led the pilgrims across the city's historic landscape

¹¹ Braunfels 1988: 53; Trachtenberg 1997: 111–13. In the period between 1299 and 1350, Florence founded a series of orthogonally planned new towns, creating loyal satellite urban communities across the Tuscan countryside, such as San Giovanni, Castelfranco di Sopra, Terranuova, Scarperia, and Firenzuola. Friedman's research has shown that the town planners employed by the Florentine commune drew from a variety of Italian, German, Swiss, and even Spanish sources (Friedman 1988).

¹² On campaigns of embellishment of the Strada Romana in the fifteenth century, see Nevola 2000; and Nevola 2007: 115–45.

¹³ This choreography of the visit and its political repercussions are discussed by Schenk 2006.

¹⁴ Including St Peter's, S. Paolo fuori le Mura, the Lateran, S. Prassede, S. Clemente, and probably many others. The likely itineraries of Charles IV's two Roman journeys are methodically reconstructed by Kubínová 2006.

¹⁵ On the cult of the Acheropita and Roman processions, see Belting 1997: 63–73, 311–29. On Rome and pilgrimage in the fourteenth century, see Kessler and Zacharias 2000.

and past its main spiritual landmarks, such as the Sancta Sanctorum (the pope's private chapel dedicated to St Lawrence) with its marble-clad interior containing many precious relics; S. Clemente, the burial church of St Cyril as well as St Clement, whose body was thought (wrongly) to have once been at Vyšehrad (Pulkava 1893: 15); the church of Sts Cosmas and Damian; and the monuments evocative of Rome's imperial past — the Forum, the Arch of Constantine, and the Basilica of Constantine and Maxentius.

Charles IV's first-hand experience of these quintessential urban models of Trecento Italy came at the height of his political powers and gave his projects in Prague a renewed focus and momentum. Founded six years before Charles set off for Rome, the New Town shares not the formal aspects but the conceptual logic of Italian town building. It is characterized by a developed sense of urban decorum articulated through architecture and public ceremony, though here its purpose is to frame and enhance the royal cult instead of a collective civic identity. It is also governed by the notion that landscape can be 'historicized', its past constructed and reinvented through, for example, the self-conscious use of the classical grid system and the evocative dedication of churches. The third element of this strategy is the central importance of the square in the overall design as a stage for commerce, governance, and cult. Unlike the divided religious and civic forums of Florence and Siena, Charles Square combined these three spheres in a single arena. The New Town hall and its asymmetrically placed tower border the north side of the square and originally faced the large covered market hall (salting house) still visible on the seventeenth-century engravings of Prague by Sadeler and Ouden-Allen (Figures 47 and 51).¹⁶ Its vaulted halls stretched as far as and virtually abutted the wooden tower, the *Heiltumstuhl*, set in the middle of the square. This imposing edifice was in place possibly as early as 1350 but certainly not later than 1354, and was used specifically for the display of the imperial insignia and the Passion relics after their translation to Prague.¹⁷ Probably similar in appearance to that recorded in Nuremberg a century later (Figure 52), this structure was replaced in 1382 by the rotunda with a tower dedicated to Corpus Christi.¹⁸ Though not of the same architectural stat-

¹⁶ The New Town hall (now largely rebuilt) took over the administration of the town in 1367 (Kibic 1979).

¹⁷ The treasure arrived at Vyšehrad (from Munich), on Easter Sunday 1350, where it was met by the Emperor and Archbishop and taken to the New Town to be displayed publicly in Prague for the first time (Francis 1884: 453).

¹⁸ The chapel was pulled down in 1789. Benešová and Opačík 2011; Polívka 1983; Grünes 1843; Bachmann 1953.



Figure 51. Folpertus Ouden-Allen, *View of the New Town* (detail), 1676–85. Emmaus monastery (with a Baroque roof, west towers and facade), on the far right. Charles Square and Corpus Christi in the centre, with the Town Hall and the covered market immediately to the left.

Collection of the author. Reproduced with permission.

ure as the iconic foci that optically and symbolically governed the layout of the Piazza della Signoria or the Campo, the Heiltumstuhl was arguably the most important monument in the New Town. Its centralized form, position, and association with the Arma Christi bore a telling resemblance to the widely circulated medieval diagrams of Jerusalem which represented the city as an encircled grid of streets sheltering the isolated structure of the *Templum Domini* in the middle.¹⁹ However, even more significant was the vision of an ideal city, not an earthly but a Heavenly Jerusalem, echoed in St Augustine's paraphrase of Psalm 46: 'there is a river the streams whereof shall make glad the city of God, the holy place of the tabernacles of the Most High. God is in the midst of her, she shall not be moved' (Augustine, *City of God*, XI. 1. 449).

¹⁹ Similarities in the layout of the New Town and Jerusalem are discussed by Lorenc 1973: 49–54, and Crossley 2000: 131–32. See also Flegl 1978.

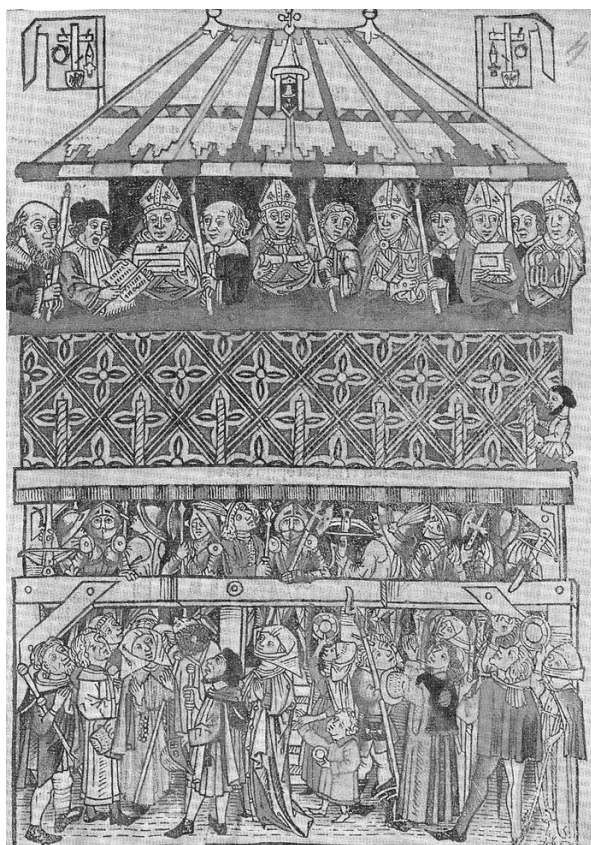


Figure 52. Display of the imperial relics and insignia from a Heiltumstuhl in Nuremberg. Woodcut, Nuremberg, 1487. Staatsarchiv Nürnberg, Rep. 52 a Reichsstadt Nürnberg: Handschriften Nr. 399a. Reproduced with permission.

The institution of the Feast of the Holy Lance and Nails in 1354 (following Charles IV's petition to the pope) and the relic displays staged on the second Friday after Easter from the tabernacle of the Heiltumstuhl fulfilled this aim of placing God at the heart of the New Town. Charles IV was personally implicated in the crucial aspects of this important event: the Emperor and his theologians composed the liturgy for the *ostensio*, while the contemporary pilgrim's badges suggest that he may have on occasion elevated the precious items on the Heiltumstuhl (Figure 53).²⁰ This annual ritual invested the landscape of the

²⁰ *Festum lancae et clavium* was instituted by the papal bull *In redemptoris nostri* issued on 13 February 1354; the text is given in full in Podlaha and Šittler 1903: 29, n. 1. Claim that Charles IV composed a special liturgy with assistance of unnamed theologians is made by a contemporary source, Beneš 1884: 519. For the discussion of the ritual and further bibliography,



Figure 53. Pilgrim's badge. Praha, Muzeum Halvního města Prahy. Second half of the fourteenth century. Author's collection.

Reproduced with permission.

New Town with a new aura of sanctity, and for many pilgrims visiting Charles Square the religious experience may have also been shaped by a cycle of extraordinary paintings in the Emmaus monastery, a royal foundation situated on the edge of the square, to which we will now turn (Figures 47 and 51).

The addition of the wall paintings to the cloister in the 1360s was an afterthought which necessitated a series of structural changes, initiated as will be argued here by the desire to include the monastery in the devotional orbit of the Charles Square relic festival both as a temporary relic depository and as a visual aide for participants (Figure 54).²¹ Recent studies of the Emmaus's painted biblical cycle have convincingly demonstrated an overwhelming dependence of its iconography on a variety of written typological sources, above all the *Speculum*

humanae salvationis (Všetečková 1996; Kubínová 2007; Kubínová 2012; and also Royt 2007). Moreover, the reconstruction of the cycle has been helped enormously by the publication of the fifteenth-century description of the paintings discovered in 1995 in the Uppsala library.²² The evidence revealed a clear narrative pattern of the cycle evolving from the south to the east wing of the cloister, beginning in the first six bays with the crucial events in human history leading to the Incarnation. The opening theme of the Fall of Man in

see Opačić 2009.

²¹ For the sake of brevity, details of the cloister's architectural analysis cannot be included here. The main evidence has been put forward by Ječný and Píša 1967–68 and Benešová 1996. My own research has established at least four consecutive campaigns in the construction of the church and cloister (Opačić 2003: 178–86).

²² Uppsala, Uppsala UL, Codex C 209, fols 231^v–230^v. The text was first published by Andersson-Schmitt 1995. For a new edition, see Kubínová 2007: 321–23.

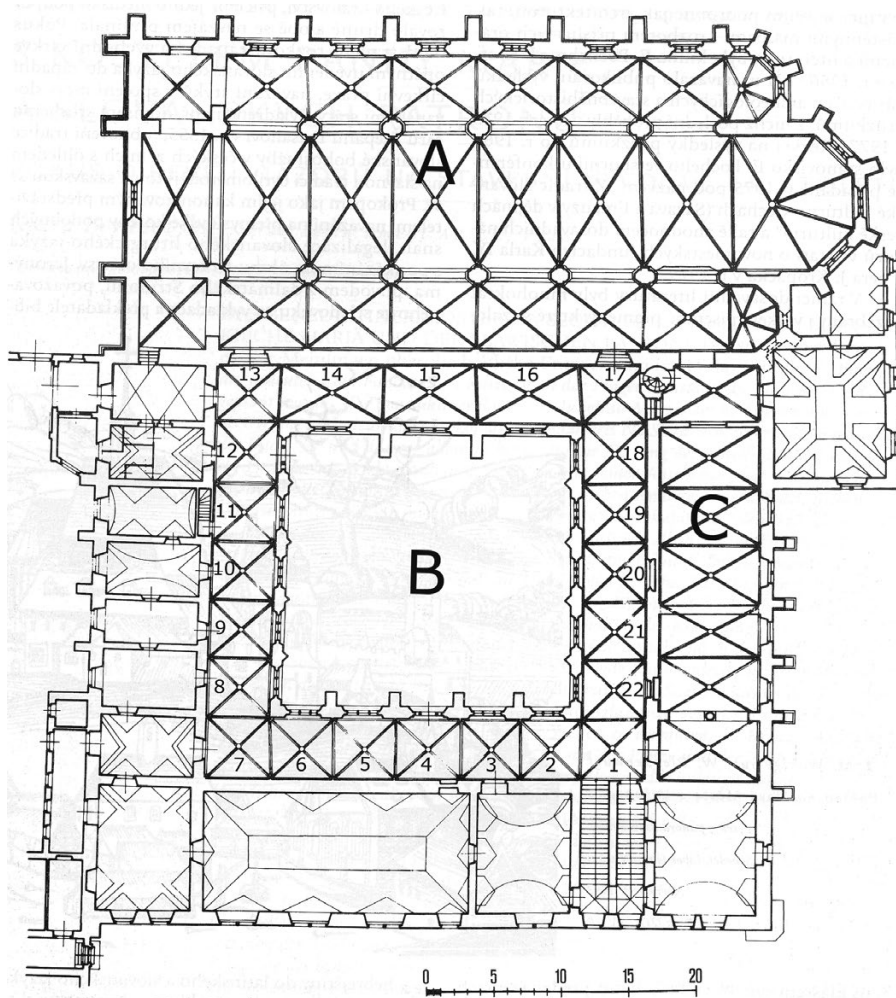


Figure 54. Plan of the Emmaus monastery: (A) church, (B) cloister, (C) 4-bay long imperial chapel (accessed directly from the south aisle of the church). Drawing courtesy of Nick Lambert. Reproduced with permission.

bays 1, 2 (now heavily damaged), and 4 is counterbalanced by other scenes in bay 4 depicting the restoration to grace through Christ (the three Crosses on Golgotha and Christ in Limbo, Figure 55). This is followed by the images of Virgin as the new Eve and the prophetic vision of the birth of Christ to Emperor Augustine (bays 5 and 6, Figures 56 and 57). The Annunciation and its common Old Testament types (Moses before the Burning Bush, and Gideon



Figure 55. Wall painting in Emmaus cloister, bay 4: God takes Enoch (or Elijah) into Paradise (top), Expulsion and Christ in Limbo (left of the window), the Bad Thief on Golgotha (right), Praha, Emmaus monastery. Praha, Ústav dějin umění, Akademie věd České republiky. Photo: Zdeněk Matyáško. Reproduced with permission.

and the Fleece, Figure 58) in the last bay of the south wing also announce the scenes from the Life of Christ in the west wing.

The north wing — with its fewer but larger bays containing twice the number of episodes per bay — focuses on the miracles of Christ and their Old Testament types. The last scene in the north wing — the Entry into Jerusalem — heralds the Passion scenes of the heavily damaged east wing, where the entire cycle ends with the Pentecost. Unusually there seems to be an interruption in the flow of the narrative in the east wing between bays 20 and 21, where the Carrying of the Cross is immediately followed by the Resurrection, thus omitting the key moments of Christ's suffering on Golgotha. There could be no question of any miscalculation by the compilers of the cycle since the entire programme seems to have been devised with great precision, carefully taking into account the place of the individual scenes within the cloister.

Moreover, the Uppsala manuscript describes twelve further scenes after the Carrying of the Cross in bay 20, including Christ being Crucified, the

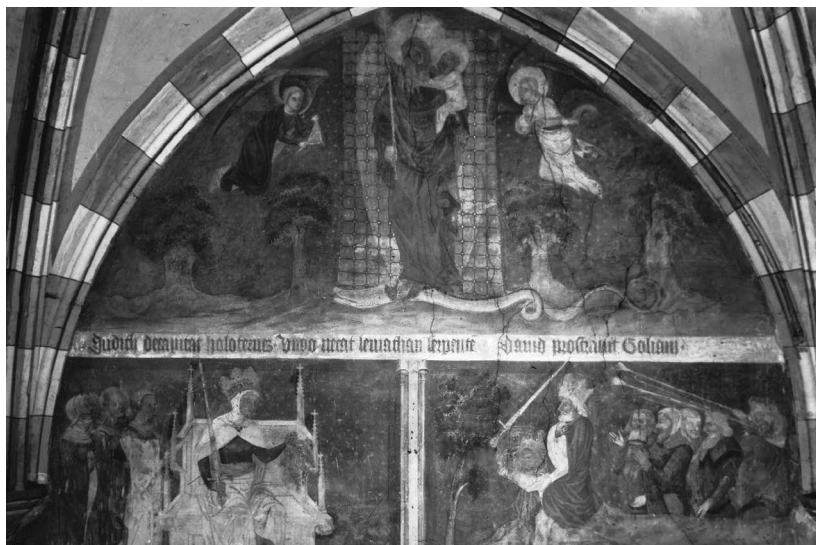


Figure 56. Wall painting in Emmaus cloister before the bomb damage in 1945, bay 5: The Virgin and the Child treading on a snake (top); Judith with the head of Holofernes (bottom left), David and Goliath (bottom right).



Figure 57. Wall painting in Emmaus cloister before 1945, bay 6: Emperor Augustus is shown the Woman Clothed in the Sun by the Tributine Sibyl.

Praha, Emmaus monastery. Fotoarchiv Marburg. Reproduced with permission.

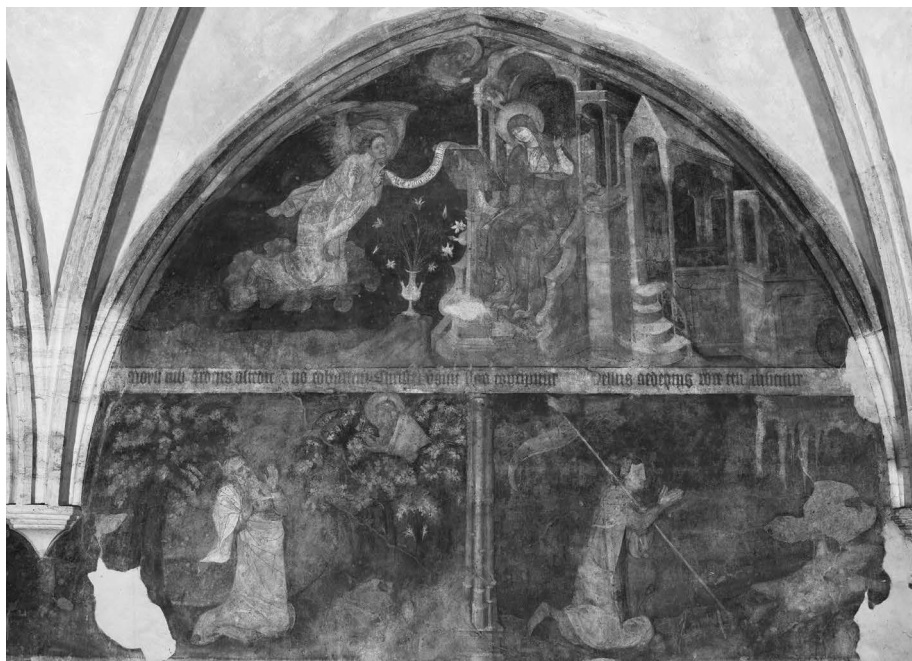


Figure 58. Wall painting in Emmaus cloister, bay 7: Annunciation (top), Moses and the Burning Bush (bottom left), Gideon and the Fleece (bottom right), Praha, Emmaus monastery. Praha, Ústav dějin umění, Akademie věd České republiky, Prague.
Photo: Zdeněk Matyáško. Reproduced with permission.

Crucifixion, Christ's side being pierced at the Cross, and Christ in Limbo, with their Old Testament parallels. It seems clear that the missing scenes could only have been originally painted in the east wing's chapel — known since 1636/37 as the Imperial chapel — created at the same time as the frescoes in the cloister (Figures 54C and 59). Although the paintings no longer survive, a fragment of a painted border on the chapel's west wall — virtually identical to the Cosmatesque border in the cloister — suggests their presence. Furthermore, a hitherto ignored nineteenth-century account refers directly to the destruction of Gothic paintings on the chapel's altar wall, while another eighteenth-century source describes angels carrying instruments of the Passion painted on the chapel's vault.²³

²³ The monastery's chronicler Hieronymus Cechner noted the angels with instruments of the Passion on the chapel's vault: according to an anonymous witness they and other paintings were destroyed in 1880. Both accounts are quoted in the unpublished 1985 report by Státní



Figure 59. The so-called Imperial Chapel in the east wing of the Emmaus cloister, Praha, Emmaus monastery. Photo: Zoë Opačić. Reproduced with permission.

These complex structural changes, striking iconography, and its unusual spatial organization lead us to conclude that the Emmaus monastery was deliberately fashioned as a temporary residence for the treasure, probably as early as the 1360s.²⁴ The proximity of the Emmaus to Charles Square would have made

Ústav pro rekonstrukci památkových měst a objektů v Praze (led by Dobroslav Líbal): Líbal and others 1985: 19 and 68.

²⁴ The safekeeping of the Imperial relics and insignia prior to their removal to Karlstein in 1365 is a subject clouded by controversy, with the sacristy of Prague Cathedral and the New Town church of St Charlemagne both suggested and documented as credible repositories for the relics. Their presence at the Emmaus monastery was first proposed by Benešová 1996: 124–25 and also strongly argued by me (Opačić 2003: 262–79; and Opačić 2007a).



Figure 60. Wall painting in Emmaus cloister before 1945, bay 15: Elijah and the Widow of Zarephath (detail), Praha, Emmaus monastery. Fotoarchiv Marburg. Reproduced with permission.

the monastery and its cloister chapel a convenient depository for the relics shortly before or after the Holy Lance feast, in the same way that they were later stored in the vaults of the Corpus Christi chapel (Pešina z Čechorodu 1664: fol. 408). However, by placing the chapel entrance so near to the south apse of the church its exclusivity was guaranteed and the possibility of public use virtually excluded.

But unlike the spiritually introverted atmosphere of the chapel, the representative and didactic nature of the cloister cycle demanded the participation of a broader assembly. A closer examination of the paintings reveals profound connections with the New Town ceremony. The Uppsala manuscript tells us that the painted cycle once began in the south wing with the scene of Chosroes being cast down by the Emperor Heraclius. The downfall of the Persian emperor who had taken the True Cross from Jerusalem was typologically likened to the demise of Antichrist, here represented by Lucifer and Simon Magus. This episode is described in the *Speculum*, and also in the *Legenda Aurea*, where it

announces the feast of the Elevation of the Cross.²⁵ The victorious image of the Byzantine Emperor Heraclius casting down evil and restoring the True Cross to Jerusalem evoked Charles IV's triumphant entry with the Passion relics into the New Town, his New Jerusalem — a momentous event re-enacted annually in the nearby square.

The juxtaposition of the Tree of Knowledge alongside the lost Deposition in bay 2, and the emblazoned image of three crosses on Golgotha in bay 4 (Figure 55 right) illustrate a growing fascination with the history, origin, and substance of the True Cross, stimulated by Charles's extraordinary accumulation of its relics. This dialectic play on the symbolism of the True Cross as both the sign of the triumph of good over evil and an instrument of martyrdom recurs in bay 15 (the widow of Zarephath, Figure 60) and in bay 20, which once depicted Christ carrying the Cross. These are not isolated examples but are, I would argue, part of a complex network of visual cross-references connecting the New Town relic ceremony and the Emmaus cloister.

The focal object of the New Town devotion — the Holy Lance — is a prominent visual 'prop' in several scenes, and in different iconographic contexts. The lance-shaped staff held by the Virgin in bay 5 is an additional attribute of her victory over the serpent and also a pointed omen of Christ's Passion (Figure 56 upper field). Similar insignia are held by the Tiburtine Sybil and Augustus in bay 6 (Figure 57), and in its pastoral form by Aaron in the damaged scene in bay 8. A large number of crowned figures radiate regal and sacerdotal symbolism, culminating with Christ's Coronation with the Crown of Thorns once depicted in the east wing's Passion cycle, and made all the more real by the display of two actual thorns in Charles Square.

The swords triumphantly drawn by Judith and David in bay 5 (Figure 56, lower fields left and right) evoke in this context the imperial sword of justice, and perhaps in particular that of Charlemagne also exhibited in the square.²⁶ In fact, a study of the list of relics exhibited in Prague reveals an intriguing number of correspondences between what was seen during the Holy Lance feast (and the Feast of the Virgin celebrated in the cathedral) and what is depicted in the cloister: for example a large part of the cradle of Christ (which could be seen to correspond with the Nativity in bay 7); the mensale from the Last Supper (depicted in bay 3); a few pieces of Manna (the Gathering of Manna,

²⁵ Všecková 1996: 133.

²⁶ On the symbolism of Charlemagne's sword and its legends, see Opačić 2007b.



Figure 61. Wall painting in Emmaus cloister, bay 14: Gathering of the Manna (detail), Praha, Emmaus monastery. Photo: Zoë Opačić. Reproduced with permission.

bay 14, Figure 61); part of the column to which Christ was tied (Flagellation, bay 19, Figure 62); and the banner from the Resurrection (bay 21).²⁷

The linking of the images with the relic festival opens up the possibility that the pilgrims would have been allowed in the Emmaus cloister during the New Town Easter celebrations, as can be seen in the following century in Simon Marmion's St Omer panel, where lay visitors languidly perambulate around the cloister contemplating a protracted 'Dance of Death' depicted on its walls (Figure 63).²⁸ This practice is also specifically described in the fourteenth-century relic display ceremony inscribed in the necrology of the Franciscan

²⁷ The principal source for the relics displayed in the New Town and the cathedral is the so-called Codex IX in the St Vitus's Chapter Library, published in Podlaha and Šittler 1903: 56–59. See also Opačić 2009: 27–29; and Kubínová 2006: 236–37, 275–86.

²⁸ Berlin, Gemäldegalerie (Cat. no. 1645). The panel belongs to the inner side of the right wing of a dismantled altarpiece, painted between 1453 and 1459, depicting the life of St Bertin (Parshall 1978: 258–59).



Figure 62. Wall painting in Emmaus cloister, bay 19: Flagellation (detail), Praha, Emmaus monastery. Photo: Zoë Opačič. Reproduced with permission.

convent in Český Krumlov, in Southern Bohemia.²⁹ The display was followed by the reading of indulgences, after which the congregation was divided into four groups. One remained in the church, the other two were taken into the cemetery and the churchyard, while the fourth proceeded to the cloister, where the full significance of what they have just seen and heard was elucidated once more. After the sermon had ended, the poor would gather in the cloister in order to receive alms.

The close modelling of Krumlov on the New Town relic display leads us to suspect that a similar ‘postlude’ may have occurred at the Emmaus monastery, to which the pilgrims would have retreated after the main ceremony in

²⁹ From the late 1350s and 1360s the ceremony took place in Krumlov’s New Town on the feast of Corpus Christi (also the dedication feast of the Franciscan convent). Praha, Národní knihovna, XIV B 15, fols 139^r–141^r. The text was first published in Czech by Tadra 1880; and in its original Latin/Old Czech version by Neuwirth 1893: 592–95. For the political circumstances of the Krumlov display and its relics, see Bauch forthcoming.



Figure 63. Simon Marmion, *Retable of St Omer* (detail), Berlin, Staatliche Museen zu Berlin, Gemäldegalerie. 1459. Photo: Achim Timmermann. Reproduced with permission.

the square. Alternatively, the pilgrimage into the cloister may have taken place on Easter Monday — following the tradition of its consecration ceremony in 1372³⁰ — and acted as a prelude to the festivities of the Holy Lance and Nails feast day (celebrated on the second Friday after Easter). In either case the images on the cloister's walls would have played an integral part in the experience and understanding of the relic display and of the pilgrimage to the New Town taken in its honour. Tangible relics and symbols of worldly power would have thus been placed in the historical context of the visible biblical narrative and its landscapes — beginning with the demise of the Antichrist, the restoration of the True Cross, and the creation of Man, and culminating in the multilingual blessings of the Holy Ghost.

³⁰ The main source for the monastery's consecration on 29 March 1372 is Beneš 1884: 545. By the seventeenth century the monastery became identified with Easter Monday processions through its gates, which continued into the nineteenth century (Gregorius Crugerius 1667: 565). Schaller purported that the procession was a medieval tradition halted by the Hussites and subsequently resumed (Schaller 1797: 74).

Lewis Mumford famously proclaimed that the architecture of a medieval city is never static.³¹ In Prague the city itself became the stage for ceremony but the experience remained kinetic. As the visitors ritually traversed along the *via sacra* between its monuments, sites, and images, they were mentally transported from its evocative landscapes to the eternal city — the only place where ‘true felicity is found in full measure’ (Augustine, *City of God*, v. 16. 216).

³¹ Mumford 1961: 277: ‘the key to the visible city lies in the moving pageant or the procession: above all, in the great religious procession that winds about the streets and places before it finally debouches into the church or the cathedral for the great ceremony itself’.

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